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CHRIST

AND THE

INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS

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'SUNDAYS ABROAD,' ETC.

W. ISBISTER & CO.

56, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON

1874

[*Twenty-second Thousand*]

EDINBURGH: T. AND A. CONSTABLE,
PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN, AND TO THE UNIVERSITY.



TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
FOX LORD PANMURE, K.T., G.C.B

AS AN EXPRESSION OF RESPECT

FOR
SERVICES RENDERED TO THE RELIGIOUS AND PUBLIC
INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY,

AND OF
GRATITUDE FOR HIS CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP TO

THE AUTHOR.

EDINBURGH, NOVEMBER 1858.



DISCOURSES.



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The Inheritance.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

COLOSSIANS i. 12.

ONE thing is often set against another in the experience of the Christian, and the providence of God. So it was with Jacob on the night he slept in Bethel. A stone was his pillow, and the cold, hard, dewy ground his bed ; yet, while sleep sealed his eyelids, the wanderer had God to guard his head, and dreams such as seldom bless a couch of down. In the visions of the night, a ladder rose before him. Resting on earth, and reaching to the stars, it formed a highway for a multitude of angels ; and as they ascended and descended in two dazzling streams of light, it stood there the glorious emblem of a redemption, whereby the intercourse between earth and heaven has been restored, and a path opened for our return to God.

This scheme of salvation may be traversed in

either of two ways. In studying it, we may descend by the steps that lead from the cause to the consummation, or, taking the opposite course, we may rise from the consummation to the cause. So—as a matter sometimes of taste, sometimes of judgment—men do in other departments of study. The geographer, for example, follows a river from the lone mountain-tops where it springs, down to the glen, into which, eager to leave sterility behind, its waters leap with a joyous bound; and from thence, after resting a while in black, deep, swirling pool, they resume their way, here spreading out into a glassy lake, or there winding like a silver serpent through flowery meadows; until, forcing a passage through some rocky gorge, they sweep out into the plain, to pursue, 'mid shady woods and by lordly tower, through corn-fields, by smiling villages and busy towns, a course which, like life, grows calmer as it nears its end. Or, starting from the sea-beach, he may trace the river upwards; till, passing town and church, tower and mill, scattered hamlets and the shepherd's solitary cot, in some mossy well where the wild deer drink, or mountain rock where eagles build, he finds its birth-place. The botanist who describes a tree, may begin with its fruit; and from the husky shell, or rugged cone, or clustering berries, he may pass to the flower;

from that to the buds ; from these to the branches ; from the branches to the stem ; and from the stem to those hidden, but strong and wide-spread roots, on which—as states depend on the humbler classes for power, wealth, and worth—the tree depends both for its nourishment and support. Or, reversing the plan, with equal justice to his subject, and advantage to his pupils, he may begin at the root and end with the fruit.

The inspired writers, in setting forth salvation, adopt sometimes the one course, and sometimes the other. With Paul, for instance, the subject of heaven now introduces Christ, and now from Christ, he turns to expatiate on the joys of heaven—here, as on an angel's wing that sheds light on every step, we see him ascending ; and there, descending the ladder—taking flight from the cross, he soars upward to the crown, and again, like an eagle sweeping down from the bosom of a golden cloud, he leaves the throne of Jesus to alight on the heights of Calvary. As an example of the ascending method, we have that well-known passage in his epistle to the Romans—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren : moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom

he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." There, we pass from the root to the fruit, step by step, from the cause to its ultimate effects. Here, Paul guides us upward along the stream of blessings to their perennial fountain. He first shews the precious gift, and afterwards the gracious Giver ; the purchase first, and afterwards the Purchaser. From the crown of glory on the brows of a Magdalene, he turns our dazzled eyes to another crown—a trophy hung upon a cross—a wreath of thorns, armed with long, sharp spikes ; where each, in place of a pearly gem, is tipped with a drop of blood. Having introduced us to heaven as our inalienable heritage, he then conducts us up to the throne of him who won it for us, that we may fall at Jesus' feet with adoring gratitude, and enter into the spirit of the saintly throng who dwell in the full fruition of his presence, and praise him throughout eternity.

The words of my text, and those also of the verse which follows it, are introductory to that sublime description of Jesus Christ, to which, after considering these preliminary verses, we intend to draw your attention. It presents a noble subject. If the Baptist, Christ's great forerunner, felt himself unworthy even to loose the latchet of his shoes,

how unworthy are these hands to sustain a theme so sacred and sublime. May he who ordaineth strength “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings”—without whose aid the strongest are weak, and by whose help the weakest are strong—now fulfil his own blessed, gracious promise, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Turning your attention, meanwhile, to the matter of the introductory verses, I remark—

I. Heaven is an Inheritance.

Examples, at once, of pride and poverty—how prone are men to attach importance to their own works, and seek at least some element of goodness in them—like grains of gold in a vast mass of rock! We are loth to believe that those qualities or works for which others esteem, and love, and praise us, and even, perhaps, crown our brows with laurel, apart from Christ, have no merit; but appear in God’s holy and heart-searching sight, as, to use a Bible phrase, “filthy rags.” It is not easy to bring human pride, no, nor human reason, to admit that; to believe that the loveliest, purest, most virtuous of womankind—the pride of a mother, and the ornament of a house—must be saved, as the vilest outcast is—as a brand plucked out of

the fire—or as he of whom the Lord said, “Take away the filthy garments from him. Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”

These feelings may partly arise from a secret suspicion, that, if our works be entirely destitute of merit, they must disincline God to save us, as well as disqualify us for being saved. But how unscriptural and God-dishonouring is a fear, which one would think the parable of the prodigal had been expressly recorded to refute? There, recognising him from afar, God hastes to embrace his son. Foul and ragged as he is, the father holds him in his arms, folds him to his bosom, and drowns his confession in this great cry of joy, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost and is found.” Nature herself proves it false by every little child who lifts its little hands to pray, Our Father which art in heaven. What a mean and low idea has he formed of God who expects less of him than of any earthly mother ! Let her be a queen. She is a mother ; and under the impulse of feelings that reign alike in palaces and in cottages, how would

she spring from her throne to embrace a lost babe ; and, shedding tears of joy, press it to her jewelled bosom, though plucked from the foulest ditch, and wrapped in tainted rags ! He knows little of our nature, fallen as it is, who fancies a mother turning from the plaintive cry and imploring arms of her offspring because, forsooth, it was restored to her in loathsome attire ; but he is more ignorant still of the heart of “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” who fancies that, unless man can establish some claim of merit, he will receive no mercy. Blessed be his name, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for us.”

Volumes of theology have been written, and hot controversies have been waged, about the question—whether heaven is, or is not, in part, the reward of our own good works ? Now there is one word in my text, whose voice authoritatively settles that matter ; and would have always settled it, had not men’s hearts been fired with angry passions, and their ears confused with the din of battle. That word is—*inheritance*. What is it ? The pay of a soldier is not inheritance ; neither are the fees of a lawyer, or of a physician ; nor the gains of trade ; nor the wages of labour. The rewards of toil or skill, these are earned by the

hands that receive them. What is inherited, on the other hand, may be the property of a new-born babe ; and so the coronet, won long ago by the stout arm of valour, and first blazoned on a battered shield, now stands above the cradle of a wailing infant. True, the broad lands, the noble rank, the hereditary honours, were won ; but they who won them are long dead ;—"their swords are rust, their bodies dust ;" and in the house of God, underneath the tattered banners, once borne before them in bloody fight, the grim old barons sleep in their marble tombs. The rewards of their prowess have descended to successors who, holding these, enjoy honours and estates, which we do not grudge them ; but which their wealth never bought, nor their courage won.

Thus the saints hold heaven. It is theirs, to use the terms of a court of law, not by conquest, but by heritage. Won by another arm than their own, it presents the strongest imaginable contrast to the spectacle in England's palace that day when the king demanded to know of his assembled nobles, by what title they held their lands? What title ! —at the rash question a hundred swords leapt from their scabbards. Advancing on the alarmed monarch—By these, they said, we won, and by these will keep them. How different the scene

which heaven presents ! All eyes are turned on Jesus with looks of love ; gratitude glows in every bosom, and swells every song ; now with golden harps they sound his praise ; and now, descending from their thrones to do him homage, they cast their crowns in one glittering heap at the feet which were nailed on Calvary. From this scene, learn in whose name to seek salvation, and through whose merits to hope for it ; and with a faith in harmony with the worship of the skies, be this your language—Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.

II. Heaven is a heritage of free grace.

We have no such claim to heavenly glory as may be established to an earthly inheritance. In consequence of a distant relationship, and of one of those sudden turns of fortune which—displaying the providence of him who abases the proud and exalts the humble—throw one family into the dust, and another into the possession of unexpected riches, an heir of noble titles and broad lands has started up from the deepest obscurity. And so I have seen a man come into a court of law, and, producing an old moth-eaten Bible, with its time-worn record of long-forgotten births, and marriages,

and deaths ; or some mouldy, musty parchment ; or some inscription copied from a tombstone which the dispute has redeemed from decay and church-yard weeds, lay a firm hand on estates and honours won centuries ago. Such strange events have happened. Heirs have entered on the property of those between whom and them there existed no acquaintanceship, nor friendship, nor fellowship—for whom they entertained no regard while they lived, and whose memory they neither cherish in warm hearts, nor preserve in cold brass or marble. But no such obscure connection or remote relationship, makes “the inheritance of the saints in light” ours. We are heirs by virtue of sonship ; once afar off—the seed of the serpent, the children of the devil, the children of wrath even as others—we become sons by that act of grace, which has led many to exclaim with John, Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

Thus heaven presents itself to us in one of its most engaging aspects, as not only an inheritance, but a home. Oh, how sweet that word ! What beautiful and tender associations cluster thick around it ! Compared with it, house, mansion, palace, are cold, heartless terms. But home !—that word quickens the pulse ; warms the heart ;

stirs the soul to its depths ; makes age feel young again ; rouses apathy into energy ; sustains the sailor on his midnight watch ; inspires the soldier with courage on the field of battle ; and imparts patient endurance to the worn-down sons of toil ! The thought of it has proved a sevenfold shield to virtue ; its very name has been a spell to call back the wanderer from the paths of vice ; and, far away, where myrtles bloom and palm-trees wave, and the ocean sleeps on coral strands, to the exile's fond fancy it clothes the naked rock, or stormy shore, or barren moor, or wild Highland mountain, with charms he weeps to think of, and longs once more to see. Grace sanctifies these lovely affections ; and imparts sacredness to the homes of earth by making them types of heaven. It is as a home, the believer delights to think of it. Thus, when lately bending over a dying saint, and expressing our sorrow to see him laid so low, with the radiant countenance rather of one who had left heaven, than of one about to enter it, he raised, and clasped his hands, and exclaimed in ecstasy, "*I am going home !*" Happy the family of which God is the father, Jesus the elder brother, and the "saints in light" are all brethren—brethren born of one Spirit ; nursed at the breast of the same promises ; trained in the same school of heavenly

discipline ; seated at the same table ; and gathered all where the innocent loves of earth are not quenched, but purified—not destroyed, but refined ! To that circle every accession forms a subject of gratitude and praise ; and every new-comer receives such welcome as a mother, while she falls on his manly breast, gives the son, or as sisters, locked in his arms, with theirs entwined around him, give the brother whom they have received back safe from wreck and storm, or the bloody fields of war. So when, on returning after weary journeys and a tedious absence, we have found the whole household astir, and all, down even to the tottering babe, with outstretched hands, and beaming faces, and joyful welcomes, at the door to meet us, we have thought, it shall be at the gates of glory. What a meeting there of parents and children, brothers and sisters, and death-divided friends !—what mutual gratulations !—what overflowing joy !—and when they have led our spirit up through long, bright lines of angels to the throne, what happiness to see Jesus, and receive our warmest welcome from the lips of him who redeemed us by his blood, and suffered for us in the agony of his cross more than a mother's pangs—"the travail of his soul."

Heir of grace ! thy estate lies there. Child of

God! thy Father, and Saviour, and brethren, and sisters, are there. Pilgrim to Sion! be pressing on, and looking up. Thy true home is there—a home above these blue skies, above sun and stars; a sweet, saintly, glorious home; whose rest shall be the sweeter for the pelting of the storm, thy rugged path, the sorrows and the tears of earth; and whose light shall be the brighter for that “valley of the shadow of death,” out of which thou shalt pass into the blaze of everlasting day. Believer! I congratulate thee on thy prospects. Lift up thy head; and let thy port be worthy of thy coming fortunes. Bear thyself as the heir of a heavenly crown; as one who, however humble thy present lot, is training for the highest society. Cultivate the temper, and acquire the manners, and learn the language of heaven; nor let the wealth or poverty, the joys or sorrows, the shame or honours of thy earthly state, ever make thee forget “the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”

III. The heirs of heaven require to be made meet for the inheritance.

I knew a man who had amassed great wealth; but had no children to inherit it. He lost the

opportunity, which one would think good men would more frequently embrace, of leaving Christ his heir; and bequeathing to the cause of religion what he could not carry away. Smitten with the vain and strange propensity to found a house, or make a family, as it is called, he left his riches to a distant relative. His successor found himself suddenly raised from poverty to affluence, and thrown into a position which he had not been trained to fill. He was cast into the society of those to whose tastes, and habits, and accomplishments, he was an utter and an awkward stranger. Many envied this child of fortune—but they might have spared their envy. Left in his original obscurity he had been a happy peasant—whistling his way home from the plough to a thatch-roofed cottage, or, on winter nights around the blazing faggots, laughing loud and merry among unpolished boors. Child of misfortune! he buried his happiness in the grave of his benefactor. Neither qualified by nature, nor fitted by education, for his position, he was separated from his old, only to be despised by his new associates. And how bitterly was he disappointed to find, that, in exchanging poverty for opulence, toil for luxurious indolence, humble friends for titled companions, a hard bed for one of down, this turn in his fortunes had flung

him on a couch, not of roses, but of thorns! In this case, the hopes of the living and the intentions of the dead were alike frustrated. The prize had proved a blank—a necessary result of this fatal oversight, that the heir had not been made meet for the inheritance.

Is such training needful for an earthly estate?—how much more for the “inheritance of the saints in light!” “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” No change to a position however lofty, from the lowest obscurity to the highest honour, from abject poverty to the greatest affluence, adequately represents the difference between the state of sin in which grace finds us, and the state of glory to which it raises us. The most ignorant and debased of our city outcasts, the most wretched and loathsome wanderer of these streets, is not so unfit to be received into the bosom of a Christian family, as you are, by nature, to be received into the kingdom of heaven. A sinner were more out of place in heaven than a ragged beggar in a palace—where, all gazing with astonishment at his appearance, and recoiling from his touch, he rudely thrusts himself within the brilliant circle. Compared with the difference between a man, as grace finds him, and heaven receives him, how feeble are all earthly distinctions?—They sink into

nothing. In truth, unless we are made meet for the inheritance, we should prove no honour to it, nor it any happiness to us.

What, for instance, were the most tempting banquet to one without an appetite, sick, loathing the very sight and smell of food?—to a man stone-deaf, what the boldest blast of trumpet, the roll of drums, stirring the soldier's soul to deeds of daring valour, or the finest music that ever fell on charmed ear, and seemed to bear the spirit on waves of sound up to the gates of heaven?—or, what to one stone-blind, scenes to which beauty lent its charms, and sublimity its grandeur—the valley clad in a many-coloured robe of flowers, the gleaming lake, the flashing cascade, the foaming torrent, the umbrageous forest, the brave trees that cling to frowning crags, the rocky pinnacles, and, high over all, hoary winter looking down on summer from her throne of untrodden snows? Just what heaven would be to man with his ruined nature, base passions, and dark, guilty conscience. Incapable of appreciating its holy beauties, or enjoying its pure happiness, a sensualist would find nothing there to delight him. How he would wonder in what its pleasures lay; and to suppose him there, were there a place of safety out of it, how he would long to escape, and keep his eye on the gate to watch its opening,

and fly, as from a doleful prison ! This inheritance to such a man were like the gift of a noble library to a rude, naked, painted savage. As, ignorant of letters, he stalked from hall to hall amid the wisdom of bygone ages, and rolled his restless eyes over unappreciated treasures, how he would sigh to be back to the forest, where he might sit among his tribe at the council-fire, or raise his war-whoop, or hunt the flying deer. People talk strangely of going to heaven when they die ; but what gratification could it afford a man whose enjoyments are of a sensuous or sensual nature,—who has no pleasure but in the acquisition of worldly objects, or the gratification of brutal appetites ? You hope to go to heaven ! I hope you will—but unless your heart is sanctified, what were heaven to you ? a vacuum, an abhorrent vacuum. The day that took you there would end all enjoyment ; and throw you, a castaway, on a solitude more lonely than a desert island. Neither angels nor saints would seek your company ; nor would you seek theirs. Unable to join in their hallowed employments, to sympathise with, or even to understand, their holy joys, you would feel more desolate in heaven than we have felt in the heart of a great city, amid crowds who spoke a language which we did not understand, and were aliens

alike in dress and manners, in language, blood, and faith.

It is the curse of vice, that its desires, outliving the power of gratification, or denied the opportunity of indulgence, become its punishment and a torment. And, denied all opportunity of indulgence, what would a drunkard do in heaven?—or, a glutton?—or, a voluptuary?—or, an ambitious man?—or, a worldling?—one whose soul lies buried in a heap of gold?—or she who, neglecting quite as much the noble purposes of her being, flits, a painted butterfly, from flower to flower of pleasure, and wastes the day of grace in the idolatry and adornment of a form which death shall change into loathsomeness, and the grave into a heap of dust? These would hear no sounds of ecstasy, and see no brightness, and be regaled with no perfumes, in paradise; but would weep, and wring their hands, and wander up and down the golden streets to bewail their death, crying—“The days have come in which we have no pleasure in them.” Eternal Sabbath,—from which nor fields, nor news, nor business afford escape,—what wert thou to those who hear no music in church bells, and ask of holy services, “When will they be over?” Oh, the slow, the weary march of hours of never-ending Sabbath devotions!—the

painful glare of a never-setting Sabbath sun? Than go down to hell, than perish in the coming storm, they may turn their prow to heaven: but only as the last refuge of a sinking bark,—a safe, it may be, but yet a friendless shore. Unlike the happy swallows which David envied, thy altar, O God, is the last spot where many would choose to build!

Such is by nature the disposition of all. “The heart is desperately wicked.” “The carnal mind” is averse from spiritual duties; and has an utter distaste for spiritual enjoyments. Nor is that all the truth—however it lie concealed, like a worm in the bud, “the carnal mind is enmity against God.” Illustrating the familiar adage, “out of sight, out of mind,” this feeling may lie dormant while our enemy is unseen; but let him appear, and his presence opens old wounds afresh, and fans the smouldering enmity into flame. Therefore, the heaven that purifies the saint would but exasperate the hatred of the sinner; and the more God’s holiness and glory were revealed, the more would this enmity be developed—just as the thicker the dews fall on decaying timber, the faster the timber rots; and the brighter the sunshine on a noxious plant, the more pestilent its juices grow. It is not in polar regions, where the day is night,

and the showers are snow, and the rivers are moving ice, and slanting sunbeams fall faint and feeble, but in the climes where flowers are fairest, and fruits are sweetest, and fullest sunshine warms the air, that nature prepares her deadliest poisons. Even so sin, could it strike root in heaven, would grow more rankly, more hating and more hateful, than on earth—there man would cast on God an eye of deepest and intensest enmity.

Hence the need of being changed in heart, and made new creatures in Jesus Christ. Hence, also, the need, which by reason of indwelling and remaining corruption even God's people daily feel, of getting, with a title, a greater meetness for the heavenly inheritance ; in other words, of being sanctified as well as justified. This work, so necessary in the very nature of things, has been assigned to the Holy Spirit. It was the office of the Son to purchase heaven for the heirs ; and it is the office of the Spirit to prepare the heirs for heaven. Thus renewed, purified, and at length wholly sanctified, we shall carry a holy nature to a holy place ; and be presented "faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy." But observe more particularly,

IV. As heaven is the gift of God, our meetness for it is the work of God.

In my text, the apostle calls for thanks unto the Father. For by whatever instruments God executes his work, whether the means employed to sanctify are dead books, or living ministers, are pleasant or painful, common or striking providences, the work is not theirs, but his. Owing him, then, no less praise for the Spirit who makes us meet for the inheritance, than for the Son who purchased it, we give thanks to God; and his church, weaving the three names into one doxology, sings, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

Let me illustrate this point by the case of Lazarus. On the day which saw him raised from the dead, he had two reasons for thanking Christ. His gratitude was due to Jesus for what he did without human instrumentality, and also for what he did by it—for the “Lazarus come forth!” that rent the grave, and for the “Loose him and let him go!” that rent the grave-clothes—not only for life, but for the liberty without which it had been a doubtful blessing. Doubtful blessing! What enjoyment had life been so long as the face-cloth

was on his eyes, and his limbs were bound in the cerements of the tomb? He emerges from the grave's black mouth a living, yet a hideous object; from whose appalling form the crowd reels back, and terror-stricken sisters might be excused for shrinking. Shrouded like a corpse, smelling of the noisome grave, with the yellow linen muffling eyes and mouth, every door had been shut against him, and the streets of Bethany cleared of flying crowds by such a frightful apparition. Who would have sat by him at the feast? or worshipped with him in the synagogue? An object of universal terror, and shunned by his dearest friends, to him life had been no boon, but a burden,—a load from which, like many weary ones, he had sought relief in the oblivion of the tomb. Had Christ done no more than bid Lazarus live, I can fancy his friend imploring him to resume the gift, saying, Take it back; let me return to that quiet grave, where the dead will not shun me, and I shall say to corruption, "Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister."

In these circumstances, the conduct of our Lord illustrates that grace which will carry on a good work, in whomsoever it is begun, to the day of the Lord Jesus. Pointing to Lazarus, as he endeavoured like a newly-awakened sinner to fling

off his shroud, and be free, he addresses the spectators, saying, "Loose him, and let him go!" And thus God deals with renewed souls. Liberty follows life. To his Holy Spirit, and, in a subordinate sense, to providence in its dealings, to ministers in the pulpit, to parents, teachers, and all other human instruments, he says, Undo the bonds of sin,—loose them, and let them go!

Now, to bring the subject home, have we not merely fancied, but felt, that we have solid, scriptural ground for believing, that the same spirit-freeing words have been spoken of us?—have we been freed from habits that were to us as grave-clothes? and emancipated from passions which once enslaved us, are we now, at least in some measure, doing what David undertook, when he said, "I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart?" In growing holiness,—in desires that, flame-like, shoot upward to the skies—in resolutions that aim at, if they do not always attain, a lofty mark—"in the lust of the flesh," and the "pride of life," nailed to a cross where, though not dead, they are daily dying,—in holy sorrows that, like a summer cloud, while they discharge their burden in tears, are spanned by a bow of hope,—in longings that aspire after a purer state and a better land,—in these things have you

at once the pledge of heaven and the meetness for it? You have! "this is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." As delightful as marvellous! Though you are less than the least of God's mercies, unworthy even of a crust of bread or of a cup of water, hail in these the tokens of a blood-bought crown—the coming glory which casts its shadow before!

But if, without this meetness, you are indulging the hope that, when you die, you will succeed to the inheritance—ah! how shall the event, and dread reality, undeceive you! Ponder these words, I beseech you, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" again, "without are dogs;" again, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Let no man delude himself; or believe that cunning devil, who,—unlike the ugly toad which, squat by the ear of Eve, filled her mind with horrid dreams,—hovers over him in the form of a benignant angel; smiling, charming away his fears with "peace, peace, when there is no peace." The only proof that God hath chosen us is, that we have chosen him. The distinguishing mark of heirs is some degree at least of meetness for the heirship. In all true saints, the spirit is willing

even when the flesh is weak ; the body lags behind the soul ; the affections outrun the feet ; and their desires are far on the road to heaven before themselves. By these signs thou mayest know thyself. Can you stand such tests ?

Ere autumn has tinted the woodlands, or corn-fields are falling to the reaper's song, or hoary hill-tops, like grey hairs on an aged head, give warning of winter's approach, I have seen the swallow's brood pruning their feathers, and putting their wings to the proof ; and, though they might return to nestle in the window-eaves, or alight again on the house-top, they darted away in the direction of sunny lands—showing that they were bound for a foreign clime, and that the period of migration from the scene of their birth was nigh. Grace also has prognostics ; and they are infallible as those of nature. So, when the soul, filled with longings to be gone, is darting heavenward, and, soaring up, mounts on the wings of faith till this big world looks a little thing, God's people know that they have the earnest of the Spirit. These are the pledges of heaven ; a sure sign that their "redemption draweth nigh." Such devout feelings afford most blessed and certain evidence that, with Christ by the helm, and "the wind," that "bloweth where it listeth," in our swelling sails, we are draw-

ing nigh to the land that is afar off—as the reeds, and leaves, and fruits that float upon the briny waves, the birds of strange and gorgeous plumage that fly round his ship and alight upon its yards, the sweet-scented odours which the wind wafts out to sea, assure the weary mariner that, ere long, he shall drop his anchor, and end his voyage in the desired haven.

The Power of Darkness.

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.

COLOSSIANS i. 13.

THE stories of subterranean caves, where diamonds, thickly studding vaulted roof and fretted walls, supply the place of lamps, are fancies—fairy tales. Incredible as the fact may appear to some, on whose admiring eyes the diamond flashes rays of light, science proves that it is formed of the very same matter as common, dull, black, coal. It boasts no native light; and dark in the darkness, as the mud or rock which form its bed, it shines, if with beautiful, yet with borrowed splendour. How meet an emblem of the jewels, the ransomed souls that adorn the Saviour's crown!

Besides, like many a gem of man and woman-kind, the diamond is of humble origin. Its native state is mean. It lies buried in the bowels of the earth—in its original condition almost as unfit to form a graceful ornament, as the stones which pave

our highways, or the rude pebbles which ocean, in her play, rolls upon the beach. Unlike many other crystals, it is encrusted with dirt, and inelegant in form ; displaying none of that matchless lustre which makes it afterwards appear more like a fragment struck from the sun than a product of this dull, cold, world. That it may glow, and sparkle, and, burning with many-coloured fires, change into a thing of beauty, it must undergo a rough, and, had it our sensibilities of nerve and life, a painful process. The lapidary receives it from the miner ; nor, till ground on his flying wheel, and polished with its own dust, does it pass into the hands of the jeweller, to be set in a golden crown or be the brightest ornament of female loveliness. Through a corresponding preparation, Christ's saints have to go. Are you saved? you have to be sanctified ; are you redeemed? you have to be renewed. Polluted, you require to be purified ; and, as they know who have experienced it, at a great cost of pain and self-denial sin has to be eradicated—utterly destroyed ; in respect of its dominant power, cast down, and of its indwelling power, cast out. Thus is the prayer fulfilled, “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly ;” and for this, as forming that meetness for the inheritance, which was the subject of my last address, the saints

are now either offering up prayer on earth, or, better far, praise and thanks in heaven.

But as the gem, ere it is polished, must be brought from the mine and its naturally base condition, so, ere those whom Christ has redeemed with his blood can be sanctified by his Spirit, they must be called and converted ; brought into a new condition ; in the words of my text, “delivered from the power of darkness,” and “translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.” This, the subject now before us, calls our attention to the greatest of all changes. I say the greatest : one even greater than the marvellous transition which takes place at the instant of death—from dying groans to the anthems of the skies. Because, while heaven is the day of which grace is the bright dawn, the fruit of which grace is the lovely flower, the glorious shrine of that temple to which grace forms the threshold and outer court—in passing from a state of nature to grace you did not rise from a lower to a higher stage of the same condition—pass from daybreak to sunshine, but from the darkness of night to dawn of day. Unlike the worm which changes into a winged insect, or the feeble infant who grows up into a man, you became, not a more perfect, but “a *new* creature” in Jesus Christ. And with deepest gratitude to him who, for “his great love

wherewith he loved us," left heaven to save the lost, let us now consider our original state—"look unto the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we are digged."

I. Consider our state of nature and sin as one of darkness.

In its essential nature, sin is as opposed to holiness as darkness is to light: as different from holiness, as a starless midnight from the blaze of noon. Our natural state is therefore, because a sinful one, represented by darkness. How appropriate and expressive the figure! Hence, in describing the condition of those who, as heathen, know neither God, nor him whom to know is life eternal, Scripture says, "The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people,"—hence, those ancient prophets who lived in the morning of the church, and descried, in the rosy east and clouds touched with gold, a sun hastening to his rise, hailed Jesus, as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel,"—hence also, as revealing saving truth, redeeming from sin, and shining on the path he opened to heaven, Jesus stood before the multitude, and said, as he pointed to the blazing sun, "I am the light

of the world." Jesus! Yes—his people's shield, he is also their sun; a shield that never breaks in battle, and a sun that never sets in night; the source of all the knowledge that illumines, and of all the love that warms them; imparting a healing, as well as heating virtue, he is "The sun of righteousness with healing in his wings."

To that emblem, so splendid and yet so simple, science imparts additional appropriateness, by the theory which accounts for those vast-stores of light and heat which we extract from dead, dark, coal. The fuel we raise from the bowels of the earth, once grew on its surface—forming, some ten or twenty thousand years ago, the giant forests where monsters ranged at will over an unpeopled world. When this rank vegetation had incorporated into its substance those elements of light and heat which the sun had poured down from heaven, God, provident of our wants, employed some tremendous convulsion to bury it in the earth, and furnish our world with ample stores of fuel for the future use of man. And thus, when the sun has set, and birds have gone to roost, and the stars have come out in the sky, and doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and peace and happiness smile on the family circle, it is old sun-light that shines from the lustres, and sun-heat that

glows on the hearth. But whether that speculation be true or false, to Jesus we can trace all the light, whether direct or derived, which illuminates the world. Heavenly fountain both of the love that warms our heart and the truth that enlightens our minds, he rose like a sun on this cold, benighted earth ; to be the centre around which heaven itself shall roll, when tides have ceased to flow below, and suns to shine above—"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

But, turning from the Saviour to contemplate the sinner, I pray you to observe, that our natural state is one not merely of darkness, but of double, deepest darkness. It is always dark to the blind ; nor blazing sun, nor shining stars to them—He to whom "the night shineth as the day," to the unhappy blind "maketh the day dark with night." Yet this figure does not adequately represent the full misery of our condition ; we are without either light, or sight. That we may be saved, two things, therefore, must be done for us. We require eyes to see with, as well as a medium to see by : to the revelation of the Gospel must be added the regeneration of the Holy Spirit ; in other words, we require to have in Christ an object for faith to

see, and in faith eyes to see with. Inhabiting a Christian land, we possess one of these, and, like the Hebrews in Goshen, have light in our dwellings ; and thus far we differ from the heathen, who enjoy neither light nor sight. Living in gross darkness, they cannot distinguish purity from pollution, and have no more idea of the way of salvation than the blind have of colours. They do not know God—some worshipping a cow ; some a serpent ; some a stone ; some the Devil. In them, reason crouches to adore a beast ; and man, made in the image of God, bows his erect form and noble head before a lifeless block. When, from the study of the unerring instinct which the lower animals—the stork in her migrations, the bee in the construction of its cell—exhibit in their allotted spheres, we turn to this amazing, and all but incredible, stupidity of man, what an illustration have we of the saying, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !”

But in this land, as I have already said, we live in light—like the angel whom John saw, we “stand in the sun ;” have at least a Goshen in our island-home. Others boast their balmy air, and richer fruits, and sunnier skies ; but our religious and civil advantages more than compensate for the fogs that veil these skies, and the storms

that rage on our rugged shores. The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places ; and happy the land, nor to be rashly left, where the light of truth streams from a thousand printing-presses, and the candle of the Lord shines bright in its humblest cottages. May I not say that, with their multitude of churches, our cities are illuminated every Sabbath, to celebrate the triumphs of the cross, the great battle won on the heights of Calvary, and the peace which herald-angels proclaimed between God and man? Men need not perish. There is no lack of knowledge. The way to heaven is plain. Better lighted than our streets, or those iron coasts along which our seamen steer, or the harbours which they boldly take in winter's blackest night, "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."

Notwithstanding the fulness of our light, what multitudes are wrecked—miserably perishing! They never reach the harbour ; entering heaven, get home. And I am bound to tell you that, unless he who gave sight to the blind, touch your eyes with "eye-salve," their fate shall be yours. What though the light of truth streams on our eye-balls? We are in darkness till we are converted ; being blind, and that not by accident, but by nature—born blind. There are animals, which, by a strange and myste-

rious law of providence, are born in that state—"having eyes, they see not." Apparently unripe for birth, born out of, because before, due time, they leave the womb to pass the first period of their being, utterly sightless ; but when some ten days have come and gone, their eyelids are unsealed, and they are delivered from the power of darkness. But not ten days, or ten years, or any length of time, will do us such friendly office. Not that we shall be always blind. In another world, men shall see, and regret the folly they were guilty of in this ; eternity opening the blindest eyes, but opening them, alas ! too late ; "he lift up his eyes, being in torment." He is a madman who braves that fate—one not to be averted, unless you bestir yourselves, and shaking off sloth, seize the golden opportunity to pursue Jesus with the blind man's cry, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me !

I can fancy few sadder sights than an entire family, parents and children, blind—a home, where the flowers have no beauty, night no stars, morning no dawn, and azure skies no glorious sun—a home, where, having never looked on each other's faces, a blind father sits by the hearth with a blind boy on his knee, and the sightless mother nurses at her bosom one who never gladdened her with its happy smile. How would such a spectacle touch

the most callous feelings, and move hearts of stone to pity! A greater calamity is ours—the eyes of our understanding are darkened. Sin quenched man's sight in Eden; and, strange result! the event which revealed their nakedness to our first parents, sealed their eyes, and those also of their children, to the greater shame of spiritual nakedness. Thus blind to their blindness, and insensible of their need of Jesus, alas, how many allow him to pass by!—losing the precious opportunity of salvation; losing it perhaps for ever. Oh for one hour of the sense and energy of the beggars who sat by the gate of Jericho! Stumbling often, falling but always to rise, they hung on the skirts of the crowd; plunged headlong into the thick of it; and, elbowing men aside, followed Jesus, filling the air with the plaintive, pitiful, and earnest prayer, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David! Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!” Be yours that cry! Follow your Saviour on their feet; and hang on him with the vehemence of him who said, “My soul followeth hard after thee.” Be turned by nothing from your purpose; keep following, and, as you follow, crying; and I promise you that that cry will stop him as surely as Joshua's pierced the heavens, and stopped the glowing axles of the sun.

That we may have a deep, and by God's blessing

a saving, impression of our need of salvation, let us look at some aspects of our state by nature in the light, if I may say so, of its darkness.

1. Darkness is a state of indolence.

Night is the proper period for rest. When the lark—emblem of a Christian at his evening prayers—sings in the close of day, and leaves the skies to drop into her dewy nest; when from distant uplands, the rooks, a noisy crowd, come sailing home; when the flowers shut their beautiful eyes, and the sun, retiring within cloudy curtains, sinks into his ocean-bed—nature, however he may neglect her lessons, teaches man to seek repose. So, with some exceptions, all honest men and women go to sleep in the dark—"they that sleep, sleep in the night;" and a tired world lies hushed in the arms of slumber, till morning, looking in at the window, calls her to rise and resume her labours. And thus, on being summoned at midnight to a bed of death, how loud one's footfall sounded in the empty thoroughfare! With thousands around who gave no sign of life, and none abroad, but prowling dog, or houseless outcast, or guilty wretch; with the tall grim tenements wrapt in gloom, save where the pale student's lamp, or the faint light of a sick chamber, glimmered dim and drear, we have felt

such awe as he might do who walks through a city of the dead. Yet it is not this city, in its hours of deepest darkness and repose, which presents a true picture of our state by nature, but that where eager angels point Lot's eyes to the break of day, and urge his tardy steps through the doomed streets of Sodom. A fiery firmament hangs over unconverted men and women ; and there is need that God send his grace to do an angel's office, saving their poor souls from impending judgments. Are you still exposed to the wrath of God?—rouse thee, then, from sleep ; shake off thy indolence ; leap from thy bed—it is all one whether thou burn on a couch of down or straw ; “escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed ;” since the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and salvation is without merit, and God is not willing that any should perish, betake thyself to the Saviour, lest thou perish—the victim more of thy sloth than of thy guiltiest sins.

Ancient Egypt supplies, perhaps, the best illustration of the connection which subsists between a state of darkness and one of indolence. We are told that God said to Moses, “Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven ; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of

Egypt three days." How passed these three days? They neither bought nor sold; married nor buried; rocked a cradle nor embalmed a corpse—no hammer rang; no merry wheel went round; no fire burned at the brick kiln; no woman sang "behind the mill;" the tread of no passenger sounded on the pavement, nor cheerful dash of oar upon the water. Awful silence reigned throughout the land. As if every house had been changed into a tomb, and all the living into mummied corpses, they sat motionless; the king on his weary throne, the peasant in the field, the weaver at his loom, the prisoner crouching in a corner of his dungeon. As in the story of some old romance, where a bold knight, sallying forth in quest of adventures, sounds his horn at the castle gate, and, getting no response, enters to find king, courtiers, servants, horses, all turned into stone—they sat, spell-bound, where the darkness seized them; "They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days."

Greater wonder! many a sinner has not risen from his place, I say not for three days, three years, but more than ten times three years. He is no nearer heaven now than a long time ago; but, borne on by time's flowing stream and sin's downward course, alas! is nearer hell. Dangerous

indolence! God says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;" "give diligence to make your calling and election sure;" "seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Therefore, I say, be up, and doing. Time is short; the stake great; death at the door, and, if he find you out of Christ, damnation is at his heels—"I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." Of your many calls, and opportunities to be saved, is this all the result?—Half awake, but unwilling to tear yourself from the arms of pleasure, do you avert your eyes from the light?—angry at being disturbed, half sorrowful perhaps, do you bid us come back at a more convenient season?—drowsily turning on your deceitful couch, do you say, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep?" Then, in God's name, what shall be the end of these things? That question admits of no answer but this—"The end of these things is death."

2. Darkness is a state of ignorance.

Conducted under the veil of night to the nuptial couch, Jacob finds in the possession of Rachel, as he supposes, an ample reward for seven years of

weary work and long waiting. She, whom his heart had wooed and hands won, is now his wedded wife. He wakes a happy man. Neither suspecting how God had punished the deceit he practised on his old blind father, nor how Laban, his master in craft, had substituted the elder for the younger daughter,—he turns, by the rosy light of morn, to gaze on his beautiful bride. Fancy his confusion, on finding blear-eyed Leah at his side! Yet the day approaches when, from dreams of wealth and pleasure, many full of rage and unavailing sorrow, shall wake to the discovery of a greater mistake. What is Jacob's to his, who, embracing pleasure, wakens to find himself in the arms of a hideous demon, by whom he is dragged down—resisting, struggling, shrieking, into the lowest hell?

But to see spiritual darkness represented on a scale in any degree commensurate with the multitude of its victims, and with its destructive power, let us turn to the host of Midian. The memorable night has come when, animated by a divine courage, Gideon leads his three hundred to the bold assault. Silently planting them around the enemy's lines, he waits till song and revel have died away, and that host lies buried in stillest slumbers. Of a sudden, a trumpet blows loud, and clear, and brave; startling the wary sentinel on his round. He stops;

he listens ; and, ere its last echoes have ceased, the whole air is torn with battle-notes. Out of the darkness, trumpet replies to trumpet ; and the blast of three hundred, blown loud and long, wakens the deepest sleepers—filling the ear of night with a dreadful din, and striking the hearts of the bravest with sudden fear. Ere they can ask what mean and whence come these strange sounds, a sight as strange blazes up through the murky night—three hundred torch-fires pierce the gloom, and advance in flaming circle on the panic-stricken camp. Suddenly extinguished, once more all is dark ; and then—as if the dust of the whirlwind, or the sands of the desert, or the leaves of the forest, had turned into armed men, ready to burst on that uncircumcised host—in front, on the rear, on either flank, rings the Hebrews' battle-cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Drawing for dear life, but mistaking friend for foe, the Midianites bury their swords in each other's bosoms ; wild with terror, stricken mad with pain, each man seizes his fellow by the beard—giving and receiving mortal wounds. And so, not by the arms of Gideon, so much as by the hand of the darkness, was skill outwitted, bravery defeated, and that mighty army routed and slain. Such is the power of darkness ! Yet what that scattered, slaughtered host to one lost soul ?

Ugliness and beauty, friend and foe, they are all one in the dark ; and so are all roads when the belated traveller cannot so much as see his finger before him, and the pool throws off no gleam, and the air appears a mass of solid darkness. Dreaming of a home he shall never reach, he draws near the precipice ; unconscious of danger, he plants his foot on its grassy edge ; another step, one loud shriek, and there he lies—a bleeding, mangled, lifeless mass. Nor, when night comes down on the deep in fog, or rain, or blinding drift, can the ill-starred mariners distinguish the rock from the sea, or wrecker's fires from harbour lights. In these cases, the darkness is the cause of death. They, showing how sinners perish, are lost—victims to the “power of darkness.”

The greatest mistake is to miss the path to heaven ; yet how many, turning from Christ, who says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” have missed, and are missing it ? Some think that their charities, and public usefulness, and household duties, will save them—some think, that by going the round and lifeless routine of prayers, and preachings, and sacraments, and outward services, they will certainly secure the favour of God—some think they may go on, and further, with impunity in a course of sin, and, at any time they please, veer

round on the other tack ; all fancying the while that they are on the road to heaven, when every step they take, and every day they live, is carrying them farther and farther away. Others in the darkness of their understandings regard religion as a thing of gloom ; and reckon the friends of their souls to be the enemies of their happiness—flying from the voice of the Shepherd to throw themselves into the jaws of the wolf. Nay, some there are plunged in yet deeper moral darkness, who remind me of a convict I saw in the hulks—that frightful receptacle of villany and crime. He did not shrink from observation, but had seated himself ostentatiously on a bench ; and there, with no blush burning on his beardless cheek, but with an expression rather of satisfaction, he was polishing the fetter on his ankle. Poor wretch, he was vain of its silvery sheen ; and who would not have the deepest pity for the darkness of his soul ? Yet darker and more dreadful the state of many who would once have exclaimed of their favourite pleasures, “Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing ?”—they boast of the victims whom they have seduced ; of their abominable debaucheries ; of virtue ensnared by their villanous arts ; of simple, unsuspecting honesty they have overreached ; of their scorn for religion, of their con-

tempt of its professors, and of their wild, licentious freedom from its holiest bonds. Blazoning their sins on their foreheads, they parade them before the world, and glory in their shame.

No man wishes, or intends to go to hell. And who, but one plunged in the ignorance of deepest darkness, would choose death rather than life, embrace sin rather than the Saviour, and waving away the cup of salvation to seize a poisoned chalice, would drink down damning draughts of forbidden pleasure? May God enlighten your eyes lest you sleep the sleep of death! Be not deceived. The tale of the goblet, which the genius of a heathen fashioned, was true—teaching a moral which many a death-bed has fearfully illustrated. Having made the model of a serpent, he fixed it in the bottom of the cup; and there, with eyes gleaming in its head, and fangs raised to strike, it lay coiled for the spring beneath the ruby wine—the cup is raised, the draught is quaffed, the dregs are reached, and now that dreadful head rises up, too late to warn. And so, when pleasure's cup is nearly emptied, and the sinner with unwilling lips is draining its bitter dregs, shall rise the ghastly terrors of remorse, and death, and judgment, on his despairing soul. A serpent lurks at the bottom of guilt's sweetest pleasure. May God, by his

word and Holy Spirit, open your eyes to this awful truth. Seized with holy horror at the sight, fling the temptation from you ; and turn to Him, who, with love burning in his heart, and kindness beaming in his looks, forgiveness on his lips, and the cup of salvation in his hand, cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Here is peace that passeth understanding—joys that will bear the morning's reflection—pleasures for evermore.

The Power of Darkness.

(Continued.)

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.

COLOSSIANS i. 13.

SAILING along a coast where a friend had suffered shipwreck, the scene which recalled his danger, filled us with no fear. On the night when his ship ran ashore, she cut her way through the densest fog ; but we were ploughing the waters of a silver sea, where noble headlands, and pillared cliffs, and scattered islands, and surf-beaten reefs, stood bathed in the brightest moonshine. There was no danger, just because there was no darkness.

The thick and heavy haze is, of all hazards, that which the sailor holds in greatest dread ; the accidents to which it exposes him, being such as neither care nor skill can avert. In a moment his bark may go crashing on the treacherous rock, or, run down by another ship, fill and founder in the deep. Rather than a glassy sea wrapped in gloom, give him the roaring storm and its mountain billows,

with an open sky above his head and wide sea-room around. In a sense, is it not so with a Christian man? Give him the light of heaven—a clear sense of his interest in Christ, and a clear sight of his duty to Christ, and, amid trials and temptations, how nobly he holds on his way; rising on the waves which often threatened to overwhelm him, he holds on his course to heaven, safer in the storm than others are in the calm. Enjoying the sunshine of God's countenance in his soul, and the light of God's word on his path, the believer is cheerful where others are cast down; he sings when others weep; when others tremble, he is calm; and, the Lord his Saviour, because his son, he adopts the brave words of David, saying, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

In resuming the subject of the previous discourse, this leads me to remark—

3. That darkness is a state of danger. As locks and bars prove, neither life nor property is so safe by night as they are by day. Honesty, having nothing to blush for, or hide, pursues her business in open day; but crime seeks the cover of the night. And what is this thief, prowling abroad

like a fox, and with stealthy foot creeping under shadow of the wall ; what that assassin, searching the gloom, and listening for the steps of his victim's approach ; what she, who, issuing from her dark den, and throwing the veil of night over painted cheek and faded finery, lurks in the streets for her prey ?—these are types of him who, as our “adversary,” takes advantage of spiritual darkness to assault God's children, and ruin poor, thoughtless sinners.

In the darkness, people have perished within reach of home—almost at their own door. So it befell one who was found in a winter morning stretched cold and dead on a bed of snow ; her glazed eyes and rigid form contrasting strangely with her gay attire. She began the night with dances, and ended it with death. She leaves the merry revels of a marriage-scene for her home across the mountain. The stars go out, and the storm comes on. Bewildered by howling tempest, and blinding drift, and the black night, she loses her way : but struggles to the last. At length, worn out and benumbed, she stretches her fragile form on that fatal bed ; and, amid dreams, perhaps, of dances, and song, and merriment, sinks into the sleep that knows no waking. Nor was it after snows were melted, and months or years had gone,

that her withering form was discovered by a shepherd on some drear upland, or in a lone mountain corrie, half buried in the dark and deep morass. No. She met her fate near by a friendly door ; perished in the darkness within a few steps of safety—yet not nearer, nor so near it as many are to salvation, who are lost. They die beside the cross ; by the very door of heaven ; and the Apostle tells us how, “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” The darkness is their death.

And, while no night ever came down so black and starless as that which has settled on human spirits, in respect of its power over men what can be compared to mental, moral, spiritual darkness ? Its chains are more difficult to rend than shackles of brass or iron. Look at Popery ! In a dungeon gloomier than ever held her victims she immures her votaries ; and throwing her fetters, not over the limbs, but the minds of men, what an illustration does she present of “the power of darkness ?” How formidable that power which can compel man to sacrifice his reason at the shrine of priestcraft : and woman, shrinking, modest, delicate woman, to allow some foul hand to search her

bosom, and drag out its secrets to the light of day ! God sends them his blessed word, best gift of heaven, and they dare not open it. Those senses of smell, and touch, and taste, which are to us the voice of God, declare the cup to be filled with wine, and the wafer made of wheat ; yet, as if their very senses as well as their souls were darkened, Papists believe that to be real blood, and this to be real flesh !—"Having eyes, they see not." And, greatest triumph of darkness ! they hug their chains ; refuse instruction ; stop their ears to argument, like the deaf adder which will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely ; and turn away their eyes from the truth, as the owls that haunt some old monastic ruin from the glare of a torch, or the blaze of day. How appropriate to the devotees of such a faith the words of Scripture—"If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness !"

Censure as well as charity, however, should begin at home ; and therefore, to be faithful to ourselves as well as just to others, we ought not to forget that melancholy illustrations of the power of darkness are found nearer at hand than Rome. In the face of all past, and much bitter, experience, how many of us live under the delusion that, though the happiness they seek in worldly objects

has, in all bygone time, eluded their grasp, in that object they now pursue, they shall certainly embrace it—a mocking phantom! How many, also, are putting away the claims of Christ and of their souls to what they flatter themselves shall be a more, but what must be a less, convenient season! Contrary to the testimony of all who have tried it, how many persist in believing God's service to be a weariness, and piety a life of gloom? Many regard the slavery of sin as true liberty, and shun the liberty of Christ as an intolerable bondage. Many fancy themselves to be safe, who, hanging over perdition by life's slender thread, are "ready to perish." Talk of the delusions of Popery, and the credulity of Papists! How many among us believe the barest and most naked lies of the devil, rather than the word of God. Alas! the feet of thousands are stumbling on the dark mountains; and, unless God enlighten them by his Spirit, the darkness, which is their danger, shall prove their death.

Were you under the tyranny of mortal man, I would not despair of your escape from his strongest dungeon. Within an old castle that sits picturesquely perched upon a noble sea rock, and to whose crumbling walls memories cling, fresh and green as the ivy that mantles them, there is a

sight to strike men with horror. Passing under a low-browed portal, and bidding farewell to the light and air of heaven, you are conducted by a flight of broken steps down into a chill, gloomy vault. In the centre of its rocky floor yawn the jaws of a horrid pit. The candle which an old man lights and swings into that dread abyss, goes down, yet deeper down, till, in a dungeon excavated in the rock, it dimly reveals the horrors of a living grave. There, the cry for help reached no ear but God's ; and no sound responded to the captive's moan but the dull, steady stroke of the billows, as they burst on the face of the crag. Into that sepulchre—where Popish bishops cast God's persecuted saints—you look to shudder, and say, “for them hope was none.” Yet from thence some made good their escape : and immure man in the strongest, grim-mest, dungeon despot ever built, with hope for his companion, liberty for his bosom-wish, a brave heart, a stout hand—and, some morning, his goaler enters to find the cage empty, and the bird flown. But, for you that are under the power of darkness—for you, who are at once the servants, and slaves, and captives of the Prince of Darkness—for you, whom he first blinds, and then binds, there is no help in man.

But there is help in God. Sin never wove, nor

in hot hell-fires did the devil ever forge a chain, which the Spirit, wielding the hammer of God's word, cannot strike from fettered limbs. Put that to the test. Try the power of prayer. Let continued, constant, earnest, wrestling prayer be made for those that are, so to speak, chained to their sins, and thrust "into the inner prison," and see whether, as on that night when Peter was led forth by the angel's hand, prayers are not turned into praise. From the belly of the whale, and the depths of ocean, and the darkness of a perpetual night, God brought up Jonah to sunny shores and lightsome liberty; and let that same God hear from vilest lips the cry—Save me, I perish—the cry of earnest desire, of lowly penitence, of an awakened conscience, of humble faith, and he shall save them by a greater deliverance. He will bow his heavens, and come down. True to his word, he, who never said to any of the sons of men, "Seek ye me in vain," will deliver from the power of darkness, and translate into the "kingdom of his dear Son."

Having from these words considered our state of nature under the emblem of darkness, I now remark—

II. That even God's people while they are here, remain in more or less darkness.

1. They may be in darkness through ignorance. Their eyes having been divinely opened, they can say with the man of old, "This I know, that I once was blind, but now I see;" and having received "the truth as it is in Jesus," and abandoned the works of darkness, they are called "the children of light, and the children of the day." Yet all of them do not enjoy the same measure of light, nor possess equal powers of sight. Skies differ, and eyes differ; and hence those conflicting views which have separated brother from brother, and rent Christ's church into many most unfortunate and lamentable divisions.

It is easy to understand how this happens. Let objects be looked at through an imperfect light; and the appearance is so different from the reality, that men fall into mistakes. In the grey morning, I have seen the fog-bank which filled the valley wear the aspect of a lake, with wood-crowned knolls lying like beautiful islands, asleep on its placid bosom. How often has superstition fled, pale, shrieking from the churchyard, to report to gaping rustics that the dead were walking; when

it was but the pale moonlight struggling through the waving branches of the old elms, that had transformed some grave-stone into a sheeted spectre ! And while the sun, seen through a mist, is shorn of his glorious splendour, and turned into a dull, red, copper ball, mean objects, regarded through the same medium, acquire a false dignity ; bushes are magnified into trees, and the humble cottage rises into a stately mansion. Now, God's own people fall into as great mistakes, on looking at divine truth through their defective vision, and the mist of those passions and prejudices that are common to humanity. Differences of opinion are inseparable from our present state, and there should be much more latitude allowed for them. But, forgetting to temper Paul's ardent zeal with his loving and liberal spirit, Christian men have allowed differences to grow into quarrels, and quarrels into divisions, till they, who once took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company, part company, saying, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" A time approaches, blessed be God, when these differences and strifes shall cease. According to old legends, the ghosts all vanished at cock-crowing ; and as the break of day dispersed the spectres, and the rolling away of the mist from

the landscape rolls away the mistakes it led to, even so, when the day of the Lord comes, it will settle all controversies—great and small. In “the seven-fold” light of Zion, God’s children shall see “eye to eye ;” they shall behold not only “him as he is,” and “the truth” as it is, but, with joyful surprise, their brethren as they are. There shall be no differences, just because there shall be no darkness. “Now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face ; now I know in part ; but then shall I know, even as also I am known.”

Meanwhile, he, who is sovereign in his dealings, and gives no account of his ways, has not equally distributed the light of saving truth ; and thus there is nothing in the kingdom of grace corresponding to a remarkable phenomenon in nature. Though at the equator each day consists of twelve hours of light, and as many of darkness, during the whole year round, on passing by one long stride to the polar regions, you stand beneath a sky which, according as the season is summer or winter, either enjoys perpetual day or is wrapped in perpetual night. There, Dr. Kane and his ship’s crew, for instance, for one hundred and forty long and weary days, were left, as the heathen in those lands on which the gospel has never shone, to unbroken night ; for three long months the sun never rose

above the horizon to cheer their icy prison with one beam of light. Yet, take the whole year round, and the inhabitants of arctic climes enjoy the same amount of sunlight as we, and others ; their summers being nightless, with skies in which the stars never rise, and the sun never sets—wheeling his fiery chariot round and round the pole. Now saving light and knowledge show nothing corresponding to this phenomenon ; nor, strange mysterious providence ! is there any such equal diffusion of gospel truth on the earth. We dare not doubt that God's ways are equal, and that eternity will shed a wondrous and glorious light on this gloomy mystery ; but over a vast extent of this fallen world we see darkness—"gross darkness"—unbroken night—nations that never hailed the rising of a better sun.

But, leaving the heathen in the hands of God, we find some Christian nations in such darkness, as to fill us with wonder that they find their way to heaven. I cannot, and would not doubt, that the Church of Rome, for instance, has true saints within her pale ; chosen ones, who shall be plucked as brands from the fire—cast out, like praying Jonah, safe upon the land. Still, her people enjoy at best "a dim religious light ;" and the gospel, permitted to reach them only through blind or selfish priests, suffers such a change as the

sunbeams that stream through the coloured windows of their gorgeous but gloomy cathedrals—with a cloud of saints, whom they are taught to worship, interposed between him and their eyes, the Saviour himself, like the sun obscured by misty vapours, stands shorn of his resplendent glory.

Again, in those few countries where there is full freedom to use the Bible, and a general use of it, and where therefore the gospel shines with cloudless splendour, God's people do not all walk in the same degree of light. Be it owing to peculiar circumstances, or to some defect of vision, they are not all equally enlightened. Some are offensively narrow-minded; and some indeed so short-sighted, that they can hardly recognise a man to be Christ's, and therefore their own, brother, unless he belong to the same church, and remember the Saviour at the same table with themselves. They are great on little things. More prone to hate the error than love the truth which they see in others, their temper is sour and suspicious. They may have the eagle-wings which can rise to near communion with God, but they want the eagle-eye which discerns distant objects, and embraces in its range of vision a broad and wide expanse. Let not their mind, but that which was in Christ, be in us: and ours be the charity

which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!

Again, while some saints enjoy a clear assurance of their salvation, and, stretching toward heaven, behold the land that is very far off—as seamen from their outlook descry the mountaintops, when their bark, ploughing a waste of waters, is yet a long way from land—there are others who pass their days in despondency. The sun seldom breaks out to cheer them; their faith has a hard fight with their fears; and it is little they know of rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of their salvation. By help of God's word—their compass—they succeed in steering their way to heaven, but it is over a troubled sea, and under a cloudy sky; nor are they ever so happy as to be delivered from depressing doubts, till fears, as well as faith, are lost in light, and they find themselves safely arrived in glory.

Again, while some, who draw their creed and all its doctrines directly from the fountain of God's word, are enlightened, catholic in spirit, and sound in the faith, it is not so with all. Calling this or that man "Rabbi," some yield too much submission to human authority. They draw the water of life, so to speak, not at its fountain-head, but at the well; it tastes of the pipe it flows through; and thus

their faith is adulterated by a admixture of earthly, though not fatal, errors.

If we allow to these views their due influence, how ought they to enlarge our hearts, and teach us a tender regard toward those from whom we differ! More even than blindness of body, blindness of mind, if not wilful and perverse, claims our pity. We all "see through a glass darkly." Perhaps we ourselves are mistaken. Perhaps our brethren are right. The possibility of this should teach us to differ meekly; and to avoid, even when denying the infallibility of the Pope, the arrogance of one who thinks himself infallible. Of this, at any rate, I am sure, that many points of difference between Christian men, like objects which are not only obscured but magnified by mist, appear larger now than they should do; and shall do in the serene light of a deathbed, and yet more certainly in the transparent atmosphere of heaven. Let us never forget that piety, though not consistent with indifference, is consistent with error; and that, though some, by heaping "gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble," on the true foundation, have done wrong, yet they shall be saved—as by fire. The errors of many are delusions; and it is both literally and figuratively true that delusions of the brain are less dangerous than diseases of the

heart. There is a wide difference between a wrong-headed and a wrong-hearted man. A man, through the darkness, may wander to a greater or less extent from the plain, patent, direct road, and yet get home ; even so, though they be happiest who pursue their journey in unclouded sunshine, yet to the upright “there ariseth light in the darkness” —shed by the Spirit within their souls, streaming down direct from heaven. And I have thought it shall be with all whose hearts beat true to God and Jesus Christ, as with one who loves his father and mother, and longs once more to see their faces, and hear their voices, and, after weary years of exile, dwell again among brothers and sisters beneath the old roof-tree. Little light serves to show him the road home ; bent on getting there, he will cross the mountains, and ford the river, and travel waste and pathless moors through the mists of the thickest day. Now, what though errors, like exhalations from the swampy ground, have risen up in many churches, obscuring to some extent the heavenly light ? Where there is genuine love to Christ, and God, and man, may we not cherish the hope that there is truth enough even in these churches to conduct the steps of every pilgrim who is honestly and earnestly inquiring the way to Zion ?—“there shall be a highway out of Egypt”—“they shall come

from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south," from various climes, and from diverse churches, "and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Nor do I despair of any finding their way to that heavenly kingdom, who, though worshipping in churches that are dimly lighted, can discern on the altar the one sacrifice for sin—Jesus dying, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

2. God's people may be in darkness through sin.—So long as you walk in the ways of his holy commandments you walk in light, and at liberty ; you have Jesus' arm to lean on ; heaven lies straight before you ; and your path, however long or steep or rugged, may enjoy perpetual sunshine. In the light of God's word, and in the beams of his countenance, the believer has that which imparts a genial warmth ; every object, as in a sunny day, looks bright and beautiful ; and the clouds, which occasionally sweep over him and discharge their burden on his head, are spanned, as they pass away, by a bow of hope. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation !" the cry of one who has wandered from the paths of purity and peace, leads us to say of such cases

that God has withdrawn the light of his countenance. But is it not more strictly true, that, in turning from the paths of holiness, we have withdrawn from it? He who descends into a pit leaves the light, not the light him. So it is with the saint who falls into sin; the deeper he sinks the darker it grows. God, who is angry with the wicked every day, will not smile even on his own child sinning; and that befalls him which would happen to the world, were its sun withdrawn—darkness settles down on his soul; a chilling cold follows on the darkness, and but for restoring grace, death itself would bring up the train. The heart that once sang like a bird is mute; the beauties of religion are lost to sight; sacraments, prayers, pious services, cease to yield their wonted pleasure; the joys of salvation—that once flowed through his soul, like bright streams among green and flowery pastures—are frozen into stillness, silence, and death; the spirit of devotion is benumbed, seized with a lethargy whose end were death, did not God send some Nathan to break the spell. When conscience is at last awakened and alarmed, in what darkness does the backslider find himself!—the sun seems down, and no star cheers the night; his mind is tortured with dreadful doubts; he recalls the days of old, but only to fear that he

was a hypocrite or a self-deceiver. And he seems to read his doom—written by God's own finger in letters of fire, where the scriptures speak of castaways, the unpardonable sin, and the impossibility of a renewal again unto repentance. Nor is the poor penitent saved from utter despair, but by clinging to the hope of pardon through the all-cleansing blood of Jesus. Thus conducted, as by a blessed angel, to "the throne of grace," and encouraged by the promise, "I will heal their backslidings and love them freely," he throws himself in the dust to cry, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"—"Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"—"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free spirit"—"Be merciful unto me, O God ; be merciful unto me."

These are the cries of David, when under a remorse as poignant as his crimes were heinous. But never fancy that you cannot lose the light of God's favour, unless you fall into a pit as deep, into sins as gross and grievous, as that good man committed. Beware of so great an error! No object, however innocent and lovely—nor man, nor woman, nor husband, nor wife, nor child, nor bosom friend—nothing beneath the sun, not heaven itself, with its holy pleasures, and high society, and welcome rest, may be allowed to come

in between our affections and Jesus Christ. Let any object interpose itself between me and the sun, and a shadow, more or less cold and dark, is the immediate consequence. Let the moon—as if forgetting that her office is to reflect the sunbeams, not to arrest them—roll in between our world and him, and she turns day into night, shrouding us in the gloom of an eclipse; even so the deep shadow of a spiritual darkness may be flung over a congregation, who, allowing the pulpit to come in between them and the cross, think too much of the servant and too little of the Master. May not that account for the scanty fruit of a ministry from which much might have been expected. God will not give his glory to another; and they who in their idolatrous regards set the servant before the Master, place the preacher in a position to intercept that blessing without which Paul may plant and Apollos water, but there is no increase. When Alexander offered to gratify Diogenes with any favour he should ask, the philosopher, considering the sun a nobler object than the conqueror of the world, and valuing his beams more than the brightest rays of royalty, begged the monarch to step aside—to stand out between him and the sun. Rude as was the cynic's answer, it were a right noble speech to any

object that would steal your heart from Christ. He who is all your salvation, should be all your desire. Is not Jesus fairer than the children of men, "the chiefest among ten thousand," more lovely than the loveliest—"altogether lovely?" Faintly imaged by the sun, he is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person."

3. *God's people may be in more or less darkness as to their spiritual state.* It is easy to account for David's distress. In his case, spiritual desertion was both the consequence and the chastisement of spiritual declension. It is not always so. There are cases of religious darkness and despondency that do not admit of being thus explained. Without any sensible decay of holiness, the shadows of Calvary have overspread the believer's soul; and, filling him with awful horror, wrung from his lips its most bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—the mercy-seat and the cross disappear in the gloom; the Sun of Righteousness undergoes an eclipse; nothing is seen but the lightnings, and nothing heard but the thunders of Sinai; flash follows flash, and peal thunders upon peal, as his sins rise up before him in clear and terrible remembrance. Were such your

case, God has provided for it. He does not leave you comfortless ; “Who,” says he, “is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” Like Peter, sinking in the waves of Galilee—the lightning flashing on their foaming crests, and the thunder crashing above his head—you may have lost sensible hold of Christ ; but it does not follow that he has lost saving hold of you. And since God’s people have retained their hold, when they have lost their sight of Christ, you are to hang on him in your seasons of deepest distress. His promises are strong as his Father’s arm ; and, clinging to these, trusting to him when you cannot see him, you may hope against hope, and even rise to the faith of one who said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”

But the spiritual state of some unquestionably pious people is not occasionally, but always more or less dark. I have known such. They could not find, at least they could not feel, any very satisfactory evidence of their conversion. We saw it. They did not ; for it happened to them as to Moses, who left the mount of God with the glory of his face visible to every one but himself. This is not a desirable state. He fights best, either with men or

devils, who fights the battle with hope at his back ; nor is anything so likely to make us diligent in preparing for glory, as a clear prospect of heaven, and sense of our holy calling? Who that, footsore, worn, and weary, has toiled up some mountain-height to see his distant home from its breezy summit, has not found the sight make another man of him ; and restoring his exhausted strength, send him off on his journey with bounding heart and elastic limbs? Therefore we say with Paul, "Give diligence, to make your calling and election sure."

Notwithstanding all your pains and prayers, have you never yet attained to the joy of faith, to a full assurance of salvation? Be not "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Blessed indeed are they whose sky is clouded with no doubts or fears—with music in their hearts, and a happiness blowing out like those flowers that only expand their leaves and breathe their fragrance on sunny days, they go up to Zion with songs ; yet they may reach home as safely, although not so pleasantly, who enjoy the light of the sun, but never see his face. Your last hours may be like hers whom John Bunyan calls Miss Fearing, and represents as being all her lifetime "subject to bondage"—dreading the hour of death. The summons comes ; she goes down into the waters ; and how does this shrinking,

trembling, timid, one bear herself? Where Christian—that bold believer who met Apollyon in the valley, and in a hand to hand fight so smote him with the sword of the Spirit, that the fiend spread forth his wings and sped away—all but perished, this daughter of many fears found the river shallow ; and beholding the opposite shore lined with shining angels, passed away with a song from earth to heaven.

The sun, who has struggled through clouds all day long, often breaks forth at his setting into golden splendour ; and not seldom, also, have the hopes that never brightened life burst forth on the saint at his departing hour. The fears that hung over the journey have vanished at its close ; and the voice, that never spoke with confidence before, has raised the shout of victory in “the valley of the shadow of death.” There, to the wonder of men and the glory of God, the tongue of the dumb has been unloosed ; what gracious things they have said !—there, the blind have got their sight ; what views of heaven they have had !—there, he, who never seemed more than a babe in Christ, has started up a giant and a strong man armed, to grapple with the last enemy. Standing in the light of life’s declining day, a conqueror—with Satan, the world, the flesh, and Death himself, beneath his feet, he spends

life's last breath singing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—thanks be to God, which giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ." And thus to him God fulfils his gracious promise, "It shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

The Kingdom of Christ.

Translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.—COLOSSIANS i. 13.

INSIDE those iron gratings which protect the ancient regalia of our kingdom, vulgar curiosity sees nothing but a display of jewels. Their stupid eyes dazzled by the gems that stud crown and sword and sceptre, the unreflecting multitude fix their thoughts and waste their admiration on these. They go away to talk of them, perhaps to covet their possession ; nor do they estimate the value of the crown but by the price which its pearls, and rubies, and diamonds, might fetch in the market.

The eye of a patriot, gazing thoughtfully on these relics of former days, is all but blind to what attracts the gaping crowd. His admiration is reserved for other, and nobler objects. He looks with deep and meditative interest on that rim of gold, not for its intrinsic value, but because it once encircled the brow of Scotland's greatest king—the hero of her independence, Robert the Bruce. His

fancy may for a moment turn to the festive scenes in yonder deserted palace, when that crown flashed amid a gay throng of princes, and nobles, and knights, and statesmen, and lords, and ladies—long mouldered into dust ; but she soon wings her flight to the worthier and more stirring spectacles which history has associated with these symbols of power. She sees a nation up in arms for its independence, and watches with kindling eye the varying fortunes of the fight. It rages around these insignia. Now, she hears the shout of Bannockburn ; and now, the long wail of Flodden. The events of centuries, passed in weary war, roll by before her. The red flames burst from lonely fortalice and busy town ; the smiling vale, with its happy homesteads, lies desolate ; scaffolds reek with the blood of patriots ; courage grapples with despair ; beaten men on freedom's bloody field renew the fight ; and, as the long, hard struggle closes, the kingdom stands up like one of its own rugged mountains,—the storms that expended their violence on its head, have left it ravaged, and seamed, and shattered, but not moved from its place. It is the interests that were at stake, the fight for liberty, the good blood shed, the hard struggles endured for its possession ; it is these, not the jewels, which in a patriot's eye make that a costly crown—a relic of the olden

time, worthy of a nation's pride and her jealous preservation.

Regarded in some such light, estimated by the sufferings endured for it, how great the value of the crown which Jesus wears? What a kingdom that which cost God his Son, and cost that Son his life? To it we have now to direct your attention ; and for this purpose, let us consider—

I. The importance which Christ himself attaches to his kingly claims.

There are crowns worn by living monarchs, of which it would be difficult to estimate the full value ; the price paid for their jewels is the least part of it. They cost thousands of lives, and rivers of human blood. Yet in Christ's esteem, and surely in ours also, his crown outweighs them all. He gave his life for it ; and alone, of all monarchs, he was crowned by the hands of Death ; for while others cease to be kings when they die, by dying he became a king. Laying his head in the dust that he might become "head over all," he entered his kingdom through the gates of the grave, and ascended the throne of the universe by the steps of a cross.

The connection between our Lord's atoning suf-

ferings and kingly claims marks some of the most touching scenes of his history. In what character did his people reject him? It was as a king—they cried, “we will not have this man to reign over us.” In what guise did the soldiers ridicule and revile him? It was as a king—“they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head.” For what crime was he crucified? Because he claimed to be a king. The royal character of the sufferer shone through the meanest circumstances of his death, and was read in the inscription which Pilate placed above his head, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.” His crown rights have been lightly thought of, and often trampled beneath the heavy foot of power; men have dared to treat them with scorn; yet he himself, the best judge of their importance and value, has taught us a different lesson. In proof of that, let us turn to two separate occasions on which he refused to abate one iota of his claims; maintaining them amid the strongest temptations to do otherwise.

Turn your eye on that desert, where, Heaven and Hell watching the issue at a distance, alone and without attendants, the two mightiest potentates that ever met on earth, meet face to face—not for conference, but for conflict. With another now to

seduce than a guileless woman—the beautiful but fragile vessel his cursed hand shattered in Eden—Satan enters the lists, armed with his deepest craft. Yet Jesus stands before him poor ; a man who, though aspiring to universal empire, is without friend or follower, rank or fame ; in him indeed poverty presents itself in its most touching aspect—he is without a morsel to eat, or a bed to lie on. Ever suiting the temptation to the tempted and, like a skilful general, assaulting the citadel on what he judges its weakest side, Satan comes not to our Lord with temptations to such passions as avarice, or lust, or ease, or self-indulgence ; but addresses that love of power, which proved his own perdition, and is the last infirmity of loftiest minds. Tacitly acknowledging, by the magnificence of the temptation, the pre-eminent virtue which resided in Christ, he offers him the bribe of an universal empire. By some phantasm of diabolic power he presents to Christ's view a panoramic vision of "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," and when he hopes the spell has wrought, kindling ambition, and rousing it to its highest pitch, he says, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Let him yield up his own claims, and receive the kingdom at Satan's hand, and he shall be king.

But, neither from such hands, nor on such conditions, will our Lord receive the sceptre. He stands on his own right to it ; ready, rather than yield that up, to endure the cross and despise the shame. So he turns with scorn from the brilliant prize, and foils the Tempter with the words, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Turn to another scene. Jesus stands before Pilate. Alone? Not now alone ; worse than alone ; deserted by the few friends he had ; and without one to acknowledge him, he is confronting malignant and powerful accusers. A savage crowd surrounds him. Blind to his divine excellence, deaf to the voice of reason, dead to gentle pity, they glare on him with their eyes, and gnash their teeth at him ; nor are restrained but by the steady port and resolute demeanour of the Roman guards from rushing in, like a pack of blood-hounds, to tear him in pieces. Blessed Lord ! now mayest thou say, "My soul is among lions ; and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." In that hour, his life hangs on a thread ; on a single word. Every charge they have brought against him has broken—bursting into spray and foam, like the sea-wave

that has launched itself furiously on a rock. Leaving their witnesses to convict themselves of perjury, Jesus, on his part, preserves unbroken silence; stands the pelting of the storm, serene and unmoved. Shame to his chosen disciples, shame to his followers, to the thousands he had blessed and cured, not one is there to espouse his cause; and, boldly stepping out, to say, in the face of that cruel, infuriate crowd, "I know the man; I know him to be the purest, kindest, greatest, best of men! Assembly of murderers, crucify him not; or, if you will perpetrate so foul a crime, crucify me with him!"

Such are the circumstances in which Pilate puts his question, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"—and on that question, and our Lord's answer, everything is now to turn. The crisis has come. His fate trembles in the balance. Let him say, No, and resign his claim—he lives; and, the baffled crowd dividing before him, like the sea of old before the host of Israel, he leaves the bar for life and liberty. Let him even maintain silence, be dumb—and he is safe; unless he compromise himself, this coward condemns not "innocent blood." Have you been present in a court of justice when the bell rang, and the jury returned, and the foreman rose to pronounce a verdict of

death or life on the pale, anxious, trembling wretch who stood before you?—amid such deep, hushed, breathless silence, Pilate, the priests, and the whole multitude, bend forward to catch our Lord's reply. If he claims to be a king, he seals his fate ; if he renounces and disavows his right, the Roman sets him at liberty. Our Lord foresees this ; and with a full foreknowledge of all the consequences of the word he is now to speak, he claims the crown. Refusing to abandon, or even to conceal, his kingly character, he returns the bold reply, "Thou sayest ;" in other words, "I am a king"—King of the Jews.

How clearly these facts illustrate the pre-eminent importance which Jesus attached to his office and character as a king ! They do more ; they demonstrate it. To explain this, let me recall a circumstance to your recollection. When our Indian empire was lately shaken to its foundations, and tottering, as many feared, to its fall, the enemy offered terms of compromise. They were rejected. Unmoved by the most adverse fortunes, undismayed by the pestilence, starvation, and murder which stared them in the face, with the hope of relief burning lower and lower as the weary days wore on, our gallant countrymen, in the darkest hour and crisis of their fortunes, would

listen to no compromise. They could die, but would not yield: and so sent back this stern answer, "We refuse to treat with mutineers." And, if our beleaguered countrymen would yield up no right in the hour of their greatest weakness and extremity, far less shall they do so now, with the tide of battle turned in their favour, and the enemy crushed, or crouching in abject terror at their feet. Now, our Lord had once the strongest temptations to abandon his kingly claims; but if he refused to give them up in the desert, where he had not a morsel to eat, and at the bar, when to have parted with them would have saved his life, he is not likely now to yield one jot or tittle of what belongs to him as a King. He has no inducement to do so. A friendless prisoner no more, he stands at the right hand of God—the head which was bound with a thorn wreath, wearing the crown of earth and heaven; and the hand they mocked with a reed, swaying the sceptre of universal empire over angels, and men, and devils. Think you that Christ will allow Satan, or the world, or the flesh, to pluck from his power what they could not wring from his weakness? Never. He consents not to share his throne with rivals from whom he won it; he claims to reign supreme in your hearts—in every heart which his grace

has renewed, and over all whom his love has conquered and his blood redeemed.

Would God that we could live up to that truth! Yet how often, and to what a sad extent, is it forgotten!—each of us doing what is right in his own eyes, as if there was no king in Israel. O that we were as anxious to be delivered from the power, as all of us are to escape the punishment, of sin! I do not say that we should look less to Christ as a Saviour; but we should certainly look more to him as a sovereign; nor fix our attention on his cross, so much to the exclusion of his crown. We are to yield him not less faith, but more obedience; we should not less often kiss his wounds, but more frequently his feet; we can never too highly esteem his love, but may think too lightly of his law. His Spirit helping us, let his claims on our obedience be as cheerfully conceded as his claim to our faith; so that to our love of his glorious person, and confidence in his saving work, we may be able to add with David, “O how love I thy law!”

II. Consider from whom Christ received the kingdom.

1. Jesus did not receive it from the Jews. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

Once, indeed—like stony-ground hearers, or those who make a profession of religion to abandon, almost as soon as they embrace, it—the Jews seemed forward to receive Jesus. They even attempted to thrust royal honours on him; “Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king;” and afterwards, by one of those popular movements which suddenly rise, like the flooded river, that sweeps onward in its headlong course stones as well as straws, they bore him in royal state to the capital. Not with sacred oil, or golden crown, or imperial purple, but such royal insignia as the circumstances admitted of, they invested their new-made king. Men denuded themselves of their garments to carpet the dusty road; mothers held up their babes to see him; women and children filled the joyous air with loud hosannas; grey old men, as the procession swept by, shed tears of joy that the long-looked-for hour had come; and, marching with the tramp of freemen—as if every foot beneath its tread crushed a Roman eagle—thousands with stout arms ready to fight for his crown, waved green palms in anticipation of triumph and victory. Thus the living wave, swelling higher as it advanced, rolled on to Jerusalem, bearing Jesus forward to the throne of David. For his mother, for the Marys, for his disciples, for all ardent patriots,

it was a glorious hour. Alas! how soon all was changed! It went by like a beautiful pageant; passed like the gleam of a stormy day; shone like a brilliant meteor that shoots athwart the dusky sky. A few days afterwards, and Jerusalem, with a crowd as great, presents another spectacle. The stage, the actors, the voices, are the same; but the drama, if I may so speak, how different! The one brief act of honour and duty, homage and triumph, is closely followed by an awful tragedy. We have seen a tale of horror and shocking butchery shake the heart of a nation; but this event struck the insensate earth with trembling, and spreading a pall of mourning over the firmament, filled creation with such signs of bereavement as fill a house when its head is smitten down by the hand of death. The tide, which bore Jesus to the crown, turns; and when next we see him, he hangs murdered upon a cross. An inconstant people have taken the object of their brief idolatry, and, like an angry child with its toy, dashed it on the ground. The only crown our Lord gets from man is woven of thorns. His Father had said, "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high;" and man found no way to fulfil that prophecy, but to raise him, amid shouts and jeers and laughter, naked and bleeding, on the accursed

tree—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

I know that a nation is not always to be held responsible for the acts of its rulers; a righteous people may have the conscience to disapprove what they have not the power to prevent. But our Lord's death was no act of the government—the act simply of Pilate, or of the priests and statesmen of the time. It was a great national deed; nor was there probably a city, nor village, nor hamlet, nor perhaps even a shepherd's solitary hut among the uplands of Judea, but had its representative in the assembly which pronounced the impious verdict. So, when Pilate put the question, it was the voice of the country which made itself heard in the unanimous and fatal judgment, "We will not have this man to reign over us"—yesterday we would; to-day we won't; let him die; away with him to the cross. Horrible crime! yet one, alas! in a sense still and often repeated; and for no other reasons than at the first. If Christ would have consented to rule on their terms, the Jews would have made him king—to establish an earthly monarchy, to gratify the nation's thirst for vengeance on their Roman masters, to make Jerusalem the proud capital, and the Jews sole sovereign rulers of a

conquered world, they would have revolted to a man. Religion lent intensity to the hatred which they bore against the empire of the Cæsars ; and, for such ends those who crucified him would have fought for him with the resolution which held Jerusalem, till delicate women devoured their children, and men, famished into ghastly skeletons, met the Romans in battle under a canopy of flames, and in the throat of the deadly breach.

Now, to this day, how many would accept of Jesus as king, would he consent to their terms—allow them to indulge their lusts, and retain their sins ! If, like those eastern princes, who leave the reins of government in other hands, he would rest content with the shadow of royalty, with the mere name and empty title of a king, many would consent to be his subjects. But be assured that he accepts not the crown, if sin is to retain the sceptre. He requires of all who name his name, that they “depart from iniquity ;” and, with “holiness unto the Lord” written on their foreheads, that they take up their cross, and deny themselves daily to follow him. On this account he is practically rejected by thousands, whose profession of religion is a name and shadow ; and the old, cruel tragedy is repeated day by day within the theatre of many a heart ! God says, “This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased ;” the preacher brings forth Jesus for acceptance, clothed in purple, and crowned with thorns, and all the tokens of his love upon him, saying, “Behold the man ;” conscience is aroused to a sense of his claims—but these all are clamoured down. Stirred up by the devil—the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, all the corrupt passions of our nature, rise like that Jewish mob to cry, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Let the fate of the Jews warn you against their sin ; for if God did such things in the green tree, what shall he do in the dry ? Be assured that, unless you are obeying Christ as a sovereign, you have never known him as a Saviour ; your faith is vain. His cross and his crown are inseparable.

2. Jesus does not receive the kingdom from his own people.

Some have fought their way onward to a palace, leaving the print of a bloody foot on every step that led to the throne. And what violence or villany, or both, have won, despotism holds. I could point to lands where the ambitious adventurer who has seized the throne, is a tyrant, and his subjects are crouching slaves—as nations will ever be, who want the backbone of religion to keep them

erect. It is God-fearing piety which makes men the best subjects of a good government, and the most formidable enemies of a bad one. Animated by its lofty hopes, and sustained by its enduring spirit, a true Christian is not the man to sell his liberties for a dishonourable peace, nor his birth-right for "a mess of pottage."

Our native land, in happy contrast with most other countries, presents an illustrious example of a family crowned by the hands and called to the throne by the free voices of the nation—the sceptre, which a female hand sways so well and gracefully over the greatest, freest, empire in the world, having been wrenched, nigh two hundred years ago, from the grasp of a popish bigot; and his successor borne to the throne on the strong arms of a people, who, to their everlasting honour, considered crowned heads less sacred than liberty and religion.

Is it by any such act of his people that Christ has been crowned? or is he a popular monarch, in the sense of having been raised to the throne by their suffrages? No. Here the king elects his subjects—not the subjects their king; and in that sense, as in many others, he who is both our Saviour and our sovereign says, "My kingdom is not of this world." There have been many disputes

about the doctrine of election, and these have given birth to most learned and profound treatises ; the combatants on one side maintaining that in election God had respect to the good works which he foresaw men were to do, while their opponents have, as we think, more wisely held, that his choice is free and sovereign—as when, descending on the plains of Damascus, he called Saul of Tarsus from being the greatest persecutor to be the greatest preacher of his church. On this subject an aged Christian uttered a remarkable saying, which I may apply to the matter in hand. She had listened with patience to a fine-spun and subtle argument against the doctrine of a free election. She did not attempt to unravel it—she had no skill for that ; but broke her way out, as through the meshes of a cobweb, with this brief reply, “I believe the doctrine of a free election ; because I know, that if God had not first chosen me, I had never chosen him.”

That reply, which was quite satisfactory to her own simple piety, and will weigh more with many than ponderous volumes of theological learning, rests on the depravity of human nature, and applies to our present subject. Aliens by nature to the commonwealth of Israel, and the enemies of God by wicked works, it is absolutely necessary that Christ should

first choose you as his subjects, before you can choose him as your king. Hence our catechism says, "Christ executeth the office of a king in *subduing* us to himself;" and thus, though the Prince of Peace, in the Psalms and elsewhere he is pictured forth as a warrior armed for the battle; who, with a sword girded on his thigh, a bow in his hand, zeal glowing in his eyes, drives the chariot of the gospel into the thick of his enemies. And as our nation lately sent off her armies, with prayers for their success, to reduce a revolted province to obedience, God when sending his Son to our world, addressed him as one about to engage in a similar enterprise, saying, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."

Christ does indeed reign by conquest; but his reign is not one of terror. The very opposite! He reigns, as he conquered, by love. For, although his people, in the first instance, neither choose him nor call him to the throne, afterwards, what king so beloved? Enthroned in the heart, he rules them through their affections; nor employs any

but the softest and strongest, the gentlest and mightiest of all forces, namely, the power of love. He subdues, but it is to save you ; he wounds but it is to heal you ; he kills, but it is to make you alive. To crown you with glory he bowed his head to the crown of thorns ; so that while other sovereigns have rendered good service to the state and deserved its gratitude, his is the only throne, filled by a king, who has this at once most singular and sublime claim on the attachment of his subjects, that he died to save them. "I am he that liveth, and was dead."

We are not such subjects as we should be. Yet the world is not to be allowed to forget, that, imperfect as their obedience is, his people are not unmindful, nor have shewn themselves regardless, of the claims which Jesus has on their devoted loyalty. In our eyes all the glory of other sovereigns pales before his—as stars when the sun has risen ; nor is there one we ever saw, or our affections ever clung to, whom we feel we should love as we ought to love Jesus Christ. True piety is not hypocrisy ; and it is due alike to Christ and the interests of religion, that the world should know that the love his people bear for him is a deeper affection than what the mother cherishes for the babe that hangs helpless on her bosom ; a

stronger passion than the miser feels for the yellow gold he clutches. With the hand of a robber on his throat, he would give it all for life, to have his grey hairs spared ; but loving Jesus, whom they never saw, better than father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or lover, or wealth, or honour, or life itself, thousands have given up all for him. Not regretting, but rejoicing in such sacrifices, they have gone bravely for his cause to the scaffold and the stake.

It is easy to die in a battle-field ; to confront death there. There, earthly prizes are won—stars and brilliant honours glitter amid that sulphureous smoke ; there, earthly passions are to be gratified—my sister was wronged, my mother butchered, my infant brother's brains dashed out against the wall. A man of like passions with others, I could believe the story told of our countrymen—how each, having got a bloody lock of a murdered woman's hair, sat down in grim and awful silence ; and, after counting the number that fell to his lot, each rose to swear by the God of heaven, that for every hair he would have an Indian's life. Amid scenes where passions boil, vengeance calls for blood—hurling me like a madman, on the hedge of steel ; and, where the shout of charging comrades cheers the soldier on, he is swept forward on blazing guns and bristling

bayonets in a whirlwind of wild excitement. But, to lie pining in a dungeon, nor ever hear the sweet voice of human sympathy ; to groan and shriek upon the rack, where cowed and shaven murderers stand by as devoid of pity as the cold stone walls around ; to suffer as our fathers did, when, calm and intrepid, they marched down that street to be hung up, like dogs, for Christ's crown and kingdom, implies a higher courage—is a far nobler, manlier, holier thing. Yet thousands have so died for Jesus ; theirs the gentle, holy, heroic spirit of that soldier boy, whose bright and touching story relieves the darkness of recent horrors, and sheds a halo of glory around the dreadful front of war. Dragged from the jungle, pale with loss of blood, wasted to a shadow with famine and hardships, far away from father, or mother, or any earthly friend, and surrounded by a cloud of black, incarnate fiends, he saw a native convert appalled at the preparations for his torture, and about to renounce the faith. Fast dying, almost beyond the vengeance of his enemies, this good, brave boy had a moment more to live ; a breath more to spend. Love to Jesus, the ruling passion, was strong in death ; and so, as the gates of heaven were rolling open to receive his ransomed spirit, he raised himself up, and casting an imploring look on the

poor waverer, cried, "Oh, do not deny your Lord!" A noble death, and a right noble testimony!

Would to God that we always heard that voice and cry, when, in the ordinary circumstances of life, we are tempted to commit sin. I say the ordinary circumstances of life; for it would almost seem as if when our trial was the smallest, our danger was the greatest. Faith rises to grand trials; and such is the vitality of Christian love, that, like the influence of the wind on fire, the storm seems rather to blow up than blow out the flame. How often have Christ's people found it easier to withstand on great than on small occasions? Those, yielding to some soft seduction, will fall into sin, who, put to it, might stand up for truth and righteousness as bravely as he who, in yonder palace, stood like a rock before an angry king. Commanded to do what lays Christ's crown at Cæsar's feet, he refuses; he is ready to dare death, but that he dare not, and he will not do. He offers his neck, but refuses *that*—addressing the imperious monarch in some such words as these, "There are two kingdoms and two kings in Scotland; there is King Jesus and King James; and when thou wast a babe in swaddling clothes, Jesus reigned in this land, and his authority is supreme."

Would to God that we, whenever tempted to commit sin, felt as true regard for Christ's paramount authority! With special reference to our own hearts be this our prayer, Thy kingdom come—take to thee thy great power and reign—"Cleanse me from secret faults, and keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." Alas, how often do we unwittingly, thoughtlessly, rashly, under the influence of old bad habits, swept away by some sudden temptation, or outburst of corruption, practically deny the Lord that bought us; yielding our members to be the servants of sin! Let us confess it; and say, with Ezra, when he rent his mantle, and fell on his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord, "Oh my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Yet let not the worldling triumph over such confessions; and allege that there is no such thing as genuine religion, or true love to Christ. This much I will venture to say for his people, and for the grace in which their great strength lies—Put us to the test, grant time for prayer and reflection, and there are thousands who, rather than renounce Jesus Christ, would renounce life itself; and treading, with unfal-

tering footstep, the well-beaten path which martyrs have made to glory, Faith, with her eye raised to heaven, would stand undaunted on the scaffold, singing, as she changed a Jewish into a Christian hymn—If I forget thee, O Jesus, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jesus above my chief joy !

The Kingdom of Christ.

(Continued.)

Translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

COLOSSIANS i. 13.

THERE was an ancient and universal custom set aside, on his coronation-day, by that great emperor who bestrode the world like a Colossus—till we locked him up in a sea-girt prison; chained him, like an eagle, to its barren rock. Promptly, as his genius was wont to seize some happy moment to turn the tide of battle, he seized the imperial crown. Regardless alike of all precedents, and of the august presence of the Roman Pontiff whose office he assumed, he placed the crown of France on his own head; and, casting an eagle eye over the applauding throng, stood up, in the pride of his power, every inch a king. The act was like the man—bold, daring, decisive; nor was it in a sense untrue—its language this, The crown I owe to no man; I myself have won it; my own right arm hath gotten me the victory. Yet, with rare exceptions, the universal custom, on such occasions,

is to perform this imposing ceremony as in the presence of God ; and, adding the solemnities of religion to the scene, by the hand of her highest minister to crown the sovereign. It is a graceful and a pious act, if, when religion is called to play so conspicuous a part, on such a stage, and in the presence of such a magnificent assembly, all parties thereby intend to acknowledge that crowns are the gift of God ; that sovereigns as well as subjects are answerable for their stewardship ; and that by Him whose minister performs the crowning act, kings reign, and princes decree justice.

According to scripture, God sets up one and puts down another ; plucks the sceptre from the hand of this man, and gives it to that ; and, as our own days have seen, makes fugitives of kings, to raise a beggar from the dust and the needy from the dunghill to set him with princes. And what he does in an ordinary and providential sense to all kings, he did in a high, pre-eminent, and special sense to his own Son. The “divine right of kings,” with which courtiers have flattered tyrants, and tyrants have sought to hedge round their royalty, is a fiction. But what in other cases is a mere fiction, is in Christ’s case a great fact. The crown that rests on his head was placed there by the hands of Divinity. It was from his own eternal

Father that he received the reward of his cross, in that kingdom which, as we have already shewed, he received neither from the Jews on the one hand, nor from his own people on the other—"Yet," says God, "have I set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." And so I remark—

3. Jesus received the kingdom from God.

When we look at the two great occasions on which our Lord was crowned, how striking is the contrast which they present?

The scene of the first is laid on earth. Its circumstances are described by the evangelists—men who were the sad witnesses of the events that they relate. And when we have found ourselves unable, without trembling voice, and swimming eyes, and kindling passions, to read the touching letters which tell of brothers, and tender sisters, and little children, and sweet babes, and beloved friends, pitilessly massacred—and remember how, even at this distance from India's bloody scenes, we were ready to swell the cry that called for vengeance on the authors of such revolting cruelty, nothing in the Bible seems more divine than the calm, unimpassioned tone with which the disciples relate the events, and moving story of their Master's wrongs. Where one could fancy an angel might

have been stirred to anger, or would have covered his eyes and wept for sorrow, their voice seems never to falter, nor their pen to shake, nor their page to be blotted by a falling tear. Where, we are ready to ask, is John's fond love, or Peter's ardent temper, or the strong, impetuous passions of these unsophisticated men? Nor is there any way of accounting for the placid flow of their narratives, other than the fact that holy men of old spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and were the organs of Him whose complacency no event ruffles, and who, dwelling in the serene altitudes of his divine nature, is raised high above all passion.

Let us look at our Lord's first coronation as they present the scene. Jesus is handed over to men of blood. Behold him stripped of his garments! His wasted form—for it is he who speaks in the prophetic words, "I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me,"—moves no pity; nor his meek and patient looks. They tie him to a post, and plough long furrows on his back. And now, cruel work is followed by more cruel sport; his guards, laughing at the happy thought, summon all the band, and hurry off the faint and bleeding prisoner to some spacious hall; coarse as the expression seems, it is true—they make game of the

Lord of Glory. The shocking play is at its height ; and what a sight to any disciple who should venture to look in ! Mute and meek, his Master sits in that hall—a spectacle of woe ; an old purple robe on his bleeding back ; in his hand a reed ; and on his sacred head a wreath—not of laurel, but of thorns ; while the blood, trickling down from many wounds over his face, falls on a breast, heaving with a sea of sorrows. Angels look on, fixed with astonishment ; devils stand back, amazed to see themselves outdone ; while all around him, the brutal crowd swells and surges. They gibe ; they jeer ; they laugh ; in bitter mockery some bend the knee, as to imperial Cæsar ; others, to give variety to the hellish sport, pluck the reed from his hand, and beat the thorns deep into his wounded brows ; and all ever and anon join in wild chorus, making the hall ring to the cry, “ Hail, King of the Jews ! ”

The people of Bethlehem, as they looked one day out at their doors, saw a poor widow, bent with grief and grey with age, walking up their street, accompanied by a Moabitess—poorly clad, and widowed like herself. She is recognised. It is Naomi ! The news flies through the town. But when old acquaintances, who hastened to greet her, beheld in such guise one who had left them

in circumstances of envied affluence, happy with a loving husband at her side and at her back two gallant sons, they were seized with blank amazement. They held up their hands to cry, "Is this Naomi?" And how might those, who had adored the Son of God as he lay in the bosom of the Father, or, singing in the skies of that same Bethlehem, bent down to gaze with wonder and worship on the babe of Mary's breast, regard the spectacle in that hall with greater bewilderment—exclaiming, "Is this the Son of God?"

These thorns formed the crown wherewith "his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." Nor should we leave that scene to turn our eyes on another, till we have thought sorrowfully of the sins, and tenderly of the love, which brought Jesus from heaven to endure such sufferings. In these wounds and blows he took our sins upon him; in these indignities he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Turn now from this cruel mockery to that scene where he received a different crown, in a different assembly, and from very different hands. The cross is standing vacant and lonely on Calvary—the crowd all dispersed; the tomb is standing

empty and open in the garden—the Roman sentinels all withdrawn ; and from the vine-covered sides of Olivet a band of men are hastily descending—joy, mingled with amazement, in their looks. With the bearing of those who have a high enterprise before them, they are descending the mountain—a stream of life destined to roll on till salvation reaches the ends of the earth. While the disciples come down to the world, Jesus, whom a cloud received from their sight, goes up to heaven ; and, corresponding to the custom of those olden days when a successful champion was borne in triumph from the field, high through applauding throngs on the shields of his companions, our Lord enters into glory, escorted by a host of angels. His battle over, and great victory won, the conqueror of Sin and Death and Hell is to be crowned ; enthroned, installed into the kingdom. Behold the scene as revealed to the eyes of Daniel ;—“ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Thus our Lord received the crown from his Father's hand ; and then was this Scripture fulfilled, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Yet observe that, in a sense, he is not satisfied. Is there no satisfying of the grave? None. Death has been feeding its voracious maw these thousand years ; yet day by day, and hour by hour, it opens that wide, black mouth to cry, "Give, give, give!" Nor, in one sense, is it possible to satisfy the love of Christ ; it is deeper than the grave, and has desires that grow with their gratification. Incessantly pleading for more and more saved ones, Jesus entreats his Father—his cry also, "Give, give." Yes ; he would rather hear one poor sinner pray, than all these angels sing ; and see one true penitent, than all these brilliant crowns lying at his feet ; and so in glory, with all eyes turned on himself, his are bent down on earth. Amid the splendid pomp of state, and enjoyments of the palace, little thinks the sovereign of the poor felon who pines in his lonely prison, crushed and terror-stricken, with haggard face and heavy heart, waiting the death to which justice has doomed him ; seldom, perhaps, in fancy, does that pallid wretch intrude himself on the gay scene, or send a groan from his cell to move one thought of pity, and disturb the sparkling flow of

royal pleasures. But Jesus does not forget the wretchedness of sinners amid the joys of heaven and the happiness of the saved. Their miseries are before him ; and amid the high hallelujahs of the upper sanctuary, he hearkens to the groans of the prisoner and the cry of such as "are appointed to die." Like a mother whose loving heart is not so much with the children housed at home, as with the fallen, beguiled, and lost one, who is the most in her thoughts, and oftenest in her prayers—Jesus is tenderly thinking of poor careless sinners, and of the sentence of death that is hanging over their heads. From his heart he pities you. He would save you, would you consent to be saved. And you, who were never honoured with an invitation to a palace nor are ever likely to be so ; you, by whom indeed the world's pettiest monarch would haughtily sweep ; you, whom they would not deem worthy of the smallest notice, Jesus, bending from his throne, invites to share his glory, and become with him kings and priests unto God.

III. Let us inquire in what character Jesus holds this kingdom.

It is not as God, nor as man, he holds it ; but as both God and man, Mediator of the New Cove-

nant, and the monarch of a new kingdom. What he was on earth he is still in heaven—God and man for ever.

He appeared in both these characters by the grave of Lazarus. “Jesus wept,”—brief but blessed record! These were precious tears. They glistened but for a little, like dew-drops on some lowly flower, ere the passing air kissed them from his cheek, or they were drunk up of the earth; yet assuring us of his sympathy in our hours of sorrow, their memory has proved a healing balm to many bleeding hearts. Weeping, his bosom rent with groans, he stands there—bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; a brother born for adversity; in the bitter hour of household bereavement, to impart strength to the arms that lay the dead in the coffin, or lower them into the lonely tomb. Yet mark how, by the same grave, he stands revealed in another character—with his divine majesty unveiled. To weep for the dead may be weakness, but to raise the dead is power. Like the clear shining after rain, when the birch trees seem hung with quivering leaves of light, and the heath sparkles, and gleams, and burns with the changing hues of countless diamonds, after that shower of tears, see how the sun of Christ’s God-head bursts forth on the scene, and he appears in

all the brightness of his Father's glory. Men have wept with him ; but standing there face to face with grim death, let both men and angels worship him. Death cowers before his eye—a greater than death is here ; Jesus is revealed as God, and the wonder of the dead brought to life, is lost in the higher wonder of one who could weep as a man, and yet work as a God.

On the Sea of Galilee also, our Lord sustains both characters. The son of Mary sleeps ; and by nights spent in prayer, and days in preaching, healing, incessant works of benevolence, he has been teaching us to go about doing good—practically rebuking those whose days are wasted in ease and idleness, and whose evenings, not calm like nature's, but passed amid the whirl of excitement or in guilty pleasures, sweet slumbers refuse to bless. Spent with labour, the son of Mary sleeps ; and shewing that there is no sleeping draught or potion of the apothecary's art which can impart such deep, refreshing slumbers as a good conscience and a busy day's good work, Jesus sleeps on a bare, hard couch ; and amid the howling of the wind, the dash and roar of stormy billows, sleeps as soundly as he ever slept when a babe in his mother's arms. He sleeps a weary man ; but see, he rises at the call of his disciples to do the

work of a God. On awaking, he found the elements in the wildest uproar—the waves chasing each other over the lake, the heavens sounding their loudest thunders, the lightnings playing among the clouds, and the winds, let loose, holding free revelry in the racked, tormented air. As I have seen a master, speaking with low and gentle voice, hush the riotous school into instant silence, so Jesus spake. Raising his hand, he addresses the storm to say, “Peace, be still;” and in an instant the wind ceases, and there is a great calm. No sooner, amid the loudest din, does nature catch the well-known sound of her master’s voice, than the tumult subsides; all is quiet; and, with a heave as gentle as an infant’s bosom, the sea of Galilee lies around that boat—all heaven’s starry glory mirrored in its crystal depths. Beautiful picture of the happy bosom into which heaven and its peace have descended!—“Justified by faith,” purchased by the blood of Christ, and blessed with his presence, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now our Lord retains in heaven both the natures which he had, and revealed, on earth. As both God and man, he occupies the throne of grace, and also the throne of providence—holding under his dominion all worlds, and principalities, and

powers ; for he, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, has been made Head over all things to the church. This must be so. He *got* the kingdom ; but, simply as God, there could be no addition made to his possessions—simply as God, he could get nothing, because all things were already his. You cannot add to the length of eternity ; nor enlarge infinity ; nor make absolute perfection more perfect ; nor to a cup, nor even to an ocean, already full, add a single drop.

And as, on the one hand, our Lord did not get the kingdom simply as God, neither, on the other hand, did he receive it simply as man. To suppose so, were to entertain an idea more absurd, more improbable, more impossible, than the fable of Atlas, who, according to the heathen legend, bore the world on his shoulders. How could an arm that once hung around a mother's neck, sustain even this one world?—but he, who lay a feeble infant on Mary's bosom, and sat wayworn and weary on Jacob's well, and, faint with loss of blood, sank in the streets of Jerusalem beneath the burden of a cross, now sustains the weight of this, and of a thousand worlds besides. An extraordinary thing is told of the first and greatest of the Cæsars. His mind was, it is said, so capacious, his faculties so mighty, and his command of them

so great, that he could at once keep six pens running to his dictation on as many different subjects. That may, or may not be true; but were Jesus Christ a mere man, in the name of reason, how could he guard the interests, and manage the affairs of his people, scattered as they are far and wide over the face of the habitable globe? What human heart were large enough to embrace them all; what eyes could see them all; what ears could hear them all? Think of ten thousand times ten thousand prayers pronounced in a hundred different tongues going up at once, and altogether, to his ear!—yet there is no confusion. None are lost; none missed in the crowd; nor does he hear them as we, standing on yonder lofty crag, hear the din of the city spread out far beneath us, with its sounds of cries, and rumbling wheels, and human voices, all mixed up into one deep, confused, hollow roar—like the booming of distant breakers. No; every believer may feel as if he were alone with God; enjoying a private audience of the king in the royal closet. Be of good cheer. Every groan of thy wounded heart, thy every sigh, and cry, and prayer, falls on Jesus' ear as if you stood beside the throne, or, nearer still, lay like John in his bosom and felt his heart beating against your own.

Jesus Christ, God and man for ever, what a grand yet consolatory truth! How full of encouragement and comfort to those, like us, who have sins to confess, sorrows to tell, and many a heavy care to cast on his sympathy and kindness. Since Mary kissed his blessed feet, since Lazarus' tomb moved his ready tears, since Peter's cry made him haste to the rescue, since John's head lay pillowed on his gentle bosom, since a mother's sorrows were felt and cared for amid the bitter agonies of his dying hour, he has changed his place, but not his heart. True man and Almighty God, God and man for ever—believer, let him sustain thy cares! Thy case cannot be too difficult, nor thy burden too heavy for him who guides the planets on their course, and bears on an unwearied arm the weight of a universe.

IV. Let me urge you to seek an interest in this kingdom.

Your eternal welfare turns on that. You must be saved, or damned; crowned in heaven, or cursed in hell. Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world; and blessed be God that it is not. For those very features which distinguish it from the world's kingdoms are among its most encouraging

aspects—they are bright with hope to the chief of sinners.

The poor say there is little chance or hope for them in this hard world. Well, are you poor?—I had almost said, so much the better. “To the poor the Gospel is preached;” so you can get well enough to heaven without gold. The wealth on which the kingdoms of this world set so high a value, and which, for all their talk of blood and breeding, has secured to a coarse plebeian alliance with patrician families, is here a hinderance rather than a help—“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

In even the freest and best-governed states, birth and wealth and rank and blood bestow on their possessors great, often too great, advantages. It is chiefly the high-born who approach the person of the sovereign, enjoy the honours of the palace, and fill the chief offices of the state. Royal favours seldom descend so low as humble life; but the grace of our King is like dews of heaven, which, leaving the mountain-tops dry, lie thick in the valleys; hanging the lowly bush with diamonds, and sowing the grassy sward broadcast with orient pearl. This is the kingdom for the mean, and the meek, and the poor, and the humble!—its King has said,

"Not many mighty, not many noble are called ;"
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is no degradation in honest poverty. But are you really degraded, debased, an outcast from decent society—characterless? not even *that* excludes you from the mercy and grace of God. "Go ye," he said, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—go to the gallows ; and preach it to the man with a rope on his neck, and his feet on the drop—go to the jail, and preach it to the scum of the city—go to her dens of iniquity, and preach it as freely and fully as in her highest and holiest congregation. Divine, saving, gentle mercy, turns no more aside from the foulest wretch, than the wind which kisses her faded cheek, or the sunbeam that visits as brightly a murderer's cell as a minister's study. Nay—though the holiest of all kingdoms—while the Pharisee stands astonished to be shut out, mark how, when the poor harlot approaches who, weeping, trembling, dares hardly lift her hand to knock, the door flies open ; and she enters to be kindly welcomed—washed, and robed, and forgiven.

Have you done nothing to merit this kingdom ? Who has?—did Manasseh ; or Simon Peter ; or Saul of Tarsus ? Was it hands reeking with the

blood of Stephen, which earned for Paul saving grace, and the honours of the chief apostleship? or was it for one look of pity, one word of sympathy from their lips, that our dying Lord, as his murderers nailed him to the tree, raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do? No. Not, they said, by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Yet, though not saved by obedience, let us remember that submission to Christ's commandments is required of all who belong to his kingdom; and that the foundations of spiritual, as of common, liberty are laid in law; are right government and righteous laws. Without law there is no true liberty. Nor can you fancy a more unhappy condition for a country than that of Israel when, without either king or government, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Ours is a free country; yet where is law so paramount?—here the baton of the humblest constable carries more authority than sceptres have done elsewhere. With liberty for the birthright of its sons, should a slave once touch these shores, he drops his chain, and is free as the waves that beat them. Still, his is freedom under, not without, law. He is not

at liberty to do what he chooses ; he cannot seize my property—at liberty to go where he chooses, he cannot enter the humblest cottage without its owner's consent—at liberty to act as he chooses, he is not allowed to commit private wrong, or disturb the public peace. Yet he is free ; only in escaping from a land of slavery to one of freedom, he does not place himself beyond authority, but exchanges lawless oppression for lawful government. So is it with those whom the truth makes free. To you the gospel is “a law of liberty,” because, bursting the bonds of sin and Satan, it sets you free to love and obey the law of God. Gladly accepting of Christ's yoke and burden, the believer says, Oh, how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day.

In a general sense, we all are the subjects of Christ's kingdom, embracing, as it does, the boundless universe ; for he who once had no place where to lay his head, is monarch of a kingdom now, whose vast extent reduces our proud boastings to contempt. The sun, they say, never sets on Britain's empire, rising on one province before he has sunk on another ; yet that sun, wheeling his mighty course in heaven, shines but on a corner of the kingdom over which Jesus reigns—to many of its provinces he appears but a twinkling star ; and

others lie so far beyond the range of his beams that immeasurable distance hides him from their view. But our Saviour's authority is paramount over all creation—He stands on the circle of the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

In a saving sense, however, Christ's kingdom is not without, but within, us. Its seat is the heart; and all is wrong unless that be right with God. It does not lie in outward things—in meat or drink; in baptism or the communion; in sobriety, purity, honesty, and the other decencies of a reputable life. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Its grace and power have their emblem in the leaven the woman laid, not on the meal, but in it—in the heart of the lump, where, working from within outwards, from the centre to the circumference, it set the whole mass fermenting; assimilating the meal to its own nature. Even so the work of conversion begins in the heart. When grace subdues the rebel, if I may so speak, the citadel first is taken; afterwards, the city. Nor is it as in those great sieges which we lately watched with such anxious interest. There, approaching with his brigades, and cavalry, and parks of artillery, man sits down outside the city, and begins the attack from a distance; with trench, parallel, and battery, he draws nearer and

nearer to the walls—creeping like a lion to the spring. A breach at length made, or the gates blown open, through the deadly gap the red living tide rolls in. Fighting from bastion to bastion, from street to street, the assailants press onward to the citadel; where rebels, beneath a defiant flag, giving no quarter and seeking none, perhaps stand by their guns, prolonging a desperate resistance. But when the hour of conversion comes, Christ descends by his Spirit into the heart—down at once into the heart. The battle of grace begins there. The heart won, grace works her way outward from a renewed heart to reformed habits. A change without succeeds the change within, until the kingdom—which, in the house of God, or by the body of the dead, or over the pages of the Bible, or amid the wreck of health or ruins of fortune, “comes not with observation”—comes to be observed. A visible change appears in the whole man. May it appear in you! then, let the world get up the old, half-incredulous, half-scornful cry, Is Saul also among the prophets? good men shall rejoice on earth, and angels celebrate the event in heaven.

The Translation.

And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

COLOSSIANS i. 13.

SUFFERING, however severe, which is passing and not perpetual, is attended with great consolation. This is true of pain, whether its seat be the body or mind ; whether it be a dead, or, worse still, a living grief ; whether the pangs of disease, the lingering sufferings of a common death, or the terrible shock of a violent one. It will soon be over, says a man ; and bares his quivering limb for the surgeon's knife ; or, eyeing the tall black gallows, he walks with firm step and erect mien to stand beneath the dangling noose, and saying to himself, It will soon be over, he closes his eyes, casts away the handkerchief, and takes the leap into eternity.

This feeling is an element of Christian, as well as of common heroism. I once knew a precious saint of God who had been often cast into the furnace, but always, like real gold, to come out the brighter for the fire ; years ago she left her sorrows

all behind to join the company of whom the angel said, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; therefore," in the front rank as the highest peers of heaven, "are they before the throne of God." The courage with which this woman met adversity—a succession of trials, shock after shock, billow bursting on the back of billow—was as remarkable as the strength with which, though a bruised reed, she seemed to bear it. And where did her great strength lie? The secret of that serene demeanour, and uncomplaining patience, was, no doubt, a sense of the divine favour. The peace of God which passeth all understanding kept her heart and mind through Jesus Christ ; yet her sorrows also found a solace, and life's bitterest hour a sweetness, in the simple couplet which was often on her lips—

"Come what, come may ;

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day."

This prospect of relief in an approaching and no distant end to suffering, has divested even the grave of its horrors.—"There'll be no sorrow there," has often turned longing eyes on the tomb's dreamless sleep. Supporting and also restraining them by his grace, God with one hand keeps

his people up under their sorrows, and with the other holds them back from anticipating their appointed time ; so that they neither rush on death, nor go unsummoned to the judgment. Unless when reason gives way, and responsibility ceases, they bide his time as theirs. Holding their post like a sentinel who, however cold the night, or fierce the storm, or thick the battle, refuses to desert it, they say with Job, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Yet, however bravely trials are met, and with whatever patience they are borne, there are times when the prospect of such relief as the grave affords, is most welcome. An object of aversion to light-hearted childhood, and to him also who is bounding away over a sunny path flowered with the hopes of spring, the grave is not so to many. They have lived to see these fair flowers wither away ; and beneath their slow and lonely steps the joys of other years lie strewed, like dead leaves in autumn. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—there is no sorrow for them either in the tomb, or beyond it ; and thus, from the grassy sod, which no troubled bosom heaves, sorrow plucks fragrant blossoms ; thus, weary life grows strong by feeding on thoughts of death ; thus, to that grave which devours the happiness of the un-

godly, faith can apply the language of the strong man's riddle, and say, as Samson did of the lion within whose skeleton ribs he found a hive of honey, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Worldly men take comfort in the saying that the longest road has a turning; in this, hope may flatter them. But, turn or not turn, God's people know that it has a termination; and that the weary journey, with its heaviest trials, shall end in rest. The certainty of this has sustained thousands who had otherwise sunk beneath their griefs; and, when calamity came with the shock of an earthquake, and reason sat stunned and stupified on her throne, often has that blessed prospect restrained the poor sufferer from turning the wish for death into a daring act, and casting life from him as a burden greater than he could bear.

I remember such a case, one never to be forgotten. The scene surpassed anything it has been my fortune to witness in the shape of mortal agony, and also in the power of Christian endurance. To be hanged, or burned, or broken on the wheel, as the martyrs were—to bear some brief hours of torture, followed by eternal rest—how the sufferer in this case would have welcomed these! His was no such happy fortune. Death struck him—like a

tree which first withers at the top—in the head ; and, in excruciating sufferings protracted for long years, he endured the pain of a hundred deaths. But his endurance was heroic ; never failing but when, once, for pity's sake and the love she bore him, he implored his wife to tear out his eyes—an expression of impatience, recalled as soon as uttered—regretted on earth, and forgiven in heaven. And never, as by that bed where I have seen him writhing like a trodden worm, have I felt so much the power of the consolation of which I speak. Happy for him that religion was not then to seek ; and that, beside a wife struck down with grief, and little children who stood dumb and saddened by their father's agony, I could bend over a pillow bedewed with the sweat of suffering, and remind him that these pains were not eternal, and that the Saviour whom he loved, would, ere long, come to take him to himself. In such a scene there was great comfort in the words—

“Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.”

Nor is this unscriptural comfort. The transient nature of all earthly trials is one important ingredient of the cordial which Paul administers to sorrowing believers—“Our light affliction, which is but *for a moment*, worketh for us a far more

exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And may not that consolation have been poured into the very cup of our Redeemer's sorrows? When he was alone in the garden, and death's cold shadow was creeping over him, and the gloom of the storm was settling down on his soul, an angel sped from heaven to strengthen him. He is prostrate before God; his face is on the ground; in an agony of supplication he has thrown himself at his Father's feet; and, shrinking from the prospect of the cross and its unutterable pains, he cries, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! At that eventful moment, with the salvation of the world hanging on its issues, I can fancy the angel reverently approaching this awful scene to strengthen our Saviour, and revive his spirit with this comfort—Lord of Glory, the cup is bitter, but not bottomless! It is no presumption to fancy that, pointing to the moon as she rode in heaven, he reminded Jesus that ere she set and rose again, his pangs should all be over; and that when next she rose, she should shine on an empty cup, and an empty cross, and Roman sentinels keeping watch by his sleeping form and peaceful tomb. Something of this, indeed, our Lord seems to intimate in the words he addressed to the traitor's band, "This is your *hour*, and the power of darkness"—for an

hour, so to speak, you may bind these hands ; but soon shall they rend the very barriers of the tomb, bringing liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound—beneath the crown of thorns, with spitting and with scornful rejection, you may hide my glory ; but, like the sun above my dying head, it shall burst from the shadow of its brief eclipse—put forth your utmost power ; its triumph shall be brief, shut up within the limits of a passing hour.

Does not the same idea also appear in the words which our Lord addressed to the traitor at the supper table ? As one who, though shrinking from a terrible operation, feels confident of relief, and braces his spirit to endurance by setting permanent ease over against a passing pain, Jesus bent his eye on Judas to say, “That thou doest, do quickly,”—do it, and have done with it ; it shall not last ; I am to be baptized, not buried, in sufferings ; from the cross where it shall bow in death—exposed on a bloody tree, and from the grave where it shall lie in darkness—pillowed on a lonesome bed, mine head shall be lifted up above mine enemies round about me ; “that thou doest, do quickly ;” I foresee the end of my sorrows, and long to enter on my rest. Now, the relief which death brought to Christ, blessed be God, it brings

to those that are his ; their passing bell ringing out sin with all its sorrows, and ringing in eternity with all its joys. And thus the same event which plunges the unbeliever into everlasting perdition, ushers the believer into the inheritance of the saints in light ; and so it is said, “with gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought ; they shall enter into the palace of the king.” Before taking up the subject of the translation, this leads me to remark—

- I. That in delivering his people from the power of darkness, Christ saves them from eternal perdition.

The punishment which sin deserves and which the impenitent and unbelieving suffer, is a very awful subject—one on which I have no pleasure in dwelling. It is a deeply solemn theme ; a terrible, inscrutable mystery ; in presence of which we stand in awe, and can only say with David,

poor creature, his fate of the presence are round about him.”

no consolations, nothing to see the dying even of a dumb creature suffer ; but the sorrows that admit of no end—these of horrors ; the deepest,

darkest, unfathomed mystery in the whole plan of the divine government. Yet what affords no pleasure may, notwithstanding, yield profit ; and that by reason of the very pain it inflicts. In the hope of such a result, let me therefore warn, beseech, and implore careless sinners to be wise, considering this solemn matter in the day of their merciful visitation. It is better surely to fear punishment than to feel it ; to look into the pit than to fall into it ; than fill your ears with syren songs of pleasure, to listen to these warning voices, “Behold now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation”—“To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” The chains which bind you are yet only locked, and the gospel has a key to open them ; but, reject the gospel offer, and what is now only locked by the hand of sin, shall be rivetted by the hand of death—like fetters on the limbs of one who leaves the bar of justice, to suffer the doom of imprisonment for life. “As the tree falls, so it lies”—“He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

People talk about the mercy of God in a way not warranted by his word ; and, ignoring his holiness, and justice and truth, they lay this and the other vain hope as a flattering unction to their souls. Thinking lightly of sin, seeing no great

harm in it, they judge God by themselves. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself," accounts for many explaining away the awful revelations of Scripture about future punishment, and why, in the face of such words as these, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," they lend such a ready ear to the devil's old and worn-out falsehood, Thou shalt not surely die. The fire they allege, and are sure, is a mere symbol. Well, take it as such, and look by the light of that symbol at the condition of the lost. Fire! What does that mean? As a symbol, as but a figure of speech, it has a terrible meaning; and this will appear if we consider its nature, and characteristic features. Let us see.

According to the imperfect science of early ages, there were four elements; and of these ancient philosophers held all things else to be compounded. They were fire, air, earth, and water; and the first of these is strikingly distinguished from the other three by this peculiar and well-marked feature, that it is destructive of life. Let us examine this matter somewhat in detail.

1. The element of earth is associated with life. Prolific mother, from whose womb we come, and to whose bosom we return, she is pregnant with

life ; an exhaustless storehouse of its germs. Raise the soil, for example, from the bottom of deepest well or darkest mine, and as divine truths, lodged in the heart in early childhood, though lying long dormant, spring up into conversion at the descent of God's Spirit, so seeds, which have lain in that soil for a thousand years, on being exposed to the quickening influences of heat, and light, and air, and moisture, will awake from their long sleep, and rise up into forms of grace and beauty. Nowhere but within the narrow walls of the churchyard—with its earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust—are death and the dust associated. Even there, life, contending for the mastery of this world, intrudes on death's silent domains, and both in the grass that waves above, and the foul worms that feed below, claims the earth as her own ! This earth is far less the tomb than a great prolific womb of life. Of its substances life builds her shrines ; beneath its surface myriads of creeping things have their highways and homes ; while its soil yields vital and bountiful support to the forests, flowers, and grasses, that clothe and adorn its naked form.

2. Air, too, is an element associated with life ; being, though invisible, as much our food as corn or flesh. Symbol of the Holy Spirit, it feeds the

vital flame ; and is essential to the existence both of plants and animals, whether their home be the land or water, the ocean or its shores—whether its vital element be extracted from the waters by their inhabitants, or directly from the atmosphere by the plants and animals that dwell on the dry land. Ceasing to breathe it, they die. With his last groan, or gasp, or long-drawn sigh, man expires—“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.” And as life exists on air, it exists in it ; nor ever presents itself in a fuller happier aspect, than at the serene close of a midsummer day, when the air is filled with the music of a thousand choristers ; and creation’s evening hymn, sung by many voices and in many notes, goes up to the ear of God ; and, the lark supplying music from the ringing heavens, nature holds innocent revels below ; and happy insects, by sparkling stream, or the sedgy borders of the placid lake, keep up their merry dances, till God puts out the lights, and, satiated with enjoyment, they all retire to rest, wrapped in the curtains of the night. Symbol of the truth that in God we live, and move, and have our being, our world itself, with all that lives on it, floats, buoyant and balanced, in an ocean of air.

3. Water, too, is an element associated with

life. Fit emblem of saving mercies, so indispensable is water to the continued existence of life, that unless furnished with it from some source or other, plants and animals speedily die. Then how does this element, which covers more than two-thirds of the surface of our globe, teem with life! Take but a drop of water, and place it under the microscope, it is a little world—full of living, active, perfect creatures, over whom a passing bird throws the shadow of an eclipse, and whose brief life of an hour or day may appear to them as long as seems to us a century of years. Imagination vainly attempts to form a conception of the myriads which, all creatures of God's care, inhabit the living waters—the rushing stream, the mountain lake, the shallow shore, the depths of ocean—from the insect which finds a home in some tiny pool, or its world on a leaf of sea-weed, to leviathan, around whose vast bulk, whether in sport or rage, the deep grows hoary and foams like a boiling pot. Abandoning the attempt, dropping the wings of fancy, we fall on our knees to say, O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all.

Mark, now, the broad difference between these elements and fire. Earth and life, air and life, water and life, are by no means necessarily antago-

nistic ; but fire and life are. Unless under such miraculous circumstances as those in which the three Hebrews walked in the fiery furnace, or the bush, as if bathed with dews, flowered amid the flames, life cannot exist in fire—in any shape or form whatever. No creature feeds, or breeds, or breathes in flames. Winds fan, and soil nourishes, and dews refresh, but fire kills ; whatever it touches, it scorches ; and whatever breathes it, dies. Turning into a heap of ashes the stateliest tree, and sweetest flowers, and loveliest form of the daughters of Eve, fire is the tomb of beauty, and the sepulchre of life ; the only region and realm within which death reigns supreme and alone, with none to dispute his sway. And thus, besides the pain it inflicts, a most characteristic feature of this element is the destruction and death it works.

Suppose, then, that the “everlasting fire” is a painted flame—nothing more than a symbol of the punishment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving, in what respects have they, who have persuaded themselves of that, improved their prospects ? It is, “as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him ; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.” Although the language of Scripture were only figurative, since it expresses the utter con-

sumption and death of all hope and happiness, what madness is it for any one to reject the Saviour, and brave a doom so terrible, for the enjoyment of a passing pleasure! Endless misery—the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched, in whatever shape it comes, is an awful thought; one we cannot think of without a shudder. Oh, why should any hear of it without fleeing instantly to Jesus; for who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning? I do not undertake to defend God's procedure in this matter. He will one day justify his ways, in the judgment even of those whom he condemns. They shall not have the miserable consolation of complaining that they have been harshly and unjustly dealt with; their own conscience shall echo the sentence that condemns them. How they shall accuse themselves; regret and curse their folly—like the scorpion, maddened with pain and in a circle of fire, turning their stings against their own bosoms!

Before we leave this subject, let us all, both saints and sinners, join in thanksgiving. Let the people praise thee, O God; let *all* the people praise thee. Fascinated by pleasure do you still linger beside the pit, although its lurid flames are, perhaps, glaring on the skies of the fast-descending

night? Be thankful that you are not in the pit; fall on your knees by its horrible brink, and let its miserable captives, who envy you your time of prayer, hear you cry for mercy; that a long-suffering God, who has preserved you to this day as a monument of his sparing, would now make you a monument of his saving, mercy. And how should saints praise him! They who have exchanged the fear of hell for a holy, happy fear of God, and enjoy the peace that passeth understanding in a good hope through grace, that they have been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;" blessed, more blessed, than if he possessed the wealth of Croesus, the poorest, humblest, weakest child of God, who can say with David—"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." It is beautiful to see a bird spring from its grassy bed, mounting up on strong wing into a morning sky of amber, and ruby, and gold, and sapphire, and to hear her, as she climbs the heavens, sing out in a gush of music the joy which God has poured into her heart; but if, through more purity, God's people enjoyed more peace of heart, were they as holy, and there-

fore as happy as they might be, how would angels stay their flight, and pause upon the wing to watch the rise, and listen to the song, of him who, as he rises, sings—My soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler : the snare is broken, and we are escaped. “Happy is that people, that is in such a case : yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”

II. Consider how we are brought into this kingdom.

Translation is the word used to describe the method. There is this difference between being transformed and being translated, that the first describes a change of character, and the second a change of state. These changes are coincident—they take place at the same time ; but the transformation is not completed, nor are saints made perfect in holiness, until the period arrive for a second translation. Then, those who were translated at conversion into a state of grace, are translated at death into a state of glory. The transformation of the soul into the image of God, and of God’s dear Son, begins at the first translation, and is finished at the second. It is with man as with a rude block of marble. Raised from its low quarry-bed, this block is, in the first instance, removed to the

sculptor's studio ; and there the shapeless mass gradually assumes, under his chisel, the features and form of humanity. Blow after blow, touch after touch, is given, till the marble grows into a triumph of his genius, and seems instinct with life ; and, at length a perfect image, it is once more removed—leaving his hand to be placed on a pedestal, the ornament of some hall or palace.

Now, the change of state that we have here to do with is that which corresponds to the removal of the block from the quarry. And let us take care that the word which describes the change from nature to grace leads to no mistake. You are not to suppose that God only is active, and that man remains passive, in this work. You may, indeed, translate a man from one earthly kingdom to another ; carrying him, for instance, across the channel which parts Great Britain from France, while his senses and faculties are steeped in slumber. The traveller may fall asleep in one country to awake in another ; and, conveyed along the level road or over an arm of the sea—rocked, perhaps, into deeper slumber by the gentle motion—he opens his eyes, amid a Babel of tongues, on the strange costumes, and faces, and scenery of a foreign land.

Not only so ; but, greater and most solemn change, a man may be translated from this world

into the next in a state of profound unconsciousness. As I have seen a mother approach the cradle and gently lift up the sleeping babe to take it to her own bed and bosom, so death, muffled in the cloud of night, and moving with noiseless step, has stolen on the sleeper, and borne him off to awake in heaven, and open his astonished eyes on the glories of the upper sanctuary; and when his children, wondering what detains their father from the morning meal, enter his chamber, the spirit is fled, and his lifeless form, like that of one who had done his work, lies in a posture of calm repose. Such a sudden transition brings an awful arrestment to a life of sin; the sinner being like some wretched criminal, tracked to his hiding-place—
asleep in the arms of guilt, the fugitive is roused by rough hands, loud voices, and the flash of lanterns; starting up, he stares wildly round, and turns pale to see his bed beset, door and window guarded—the officers of justice are come to drag him to prison. But to die and not know it, not even to taste death, to be spared the bitter cup, to be saved the mortal struggle, to be borne across the deep cold waters asleep in Jesus' arms, to be wakened out of nature's slumbers by the music of heavenly harps and the blaze of glory—what a happy close to a holy life!

It is not in this quiet, gentle, placid way, that sinners are translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son ; far otherwise. And in illustration of that, I now remark—

1. That this change is attended by suffering and self-denial.

Shot by a bullet, prostrated by a blow, deprived at once of consciousness and of existence by an opiate or some other narcotic, man may die quite unconsciously. But thus he never dies to sin. Best of all deaths, it is yet attended by a painful, and often a protracted, struggle ; with pains as great as his, who, when the nails have crashed through nerve, and flesh, and bone, hangs convulsed and quivering on the arms of a cross. Hence these striking metaphors : “They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts ;” “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” I would not deter you from resolving, by the grace of God and through the aids of the Holy Spirit, to take up your cross, and deny yourselves daily, and follow Jesus. The crown is worthy of the cross. I have no doubt that more pain is suffered in going to hell than to heaven ; and, though there were not, how will one hour of glory recompense you

for years of sufferings and sacrifices on earth? I only wish to dissipate the delusion under which some seem to live, and, living, certainly perish, that indolence, and ease, and self-indulgence, may inherit the kingdom of God. They seem to think that they have no occasion to be anxious about their souls ; resting satisfied that it may be, and is, all right with them, though they are not conscious of having ever felt any serious alarm on account of sin, of having made any effort to be saved, or suffered any self-denying pains.

Be assured that, as it is among pangs and birth-struggles that man is born the first time, it is in sorrow and pain that he is born again : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice ; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” May not John have had some reference to this, when he said of Jesus, He that cometh after me is mightier than I—he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*? This is another thing from being baptized with water. How often has the water fallen from our hand on

the brow of a sleeping infant, which, held up in a father's arms, was restored to a mother's bosom all unconscious of its baptism—translated asleep into the visible church of Christ. But a fiery baptism, the descent of the Spirit in conversion, implies pain—such convictions of sin and dread of hell, such self-reproach, such remorse, as have risen to agony, and driven man distracted, to the verge of madness. Fire scorches the flesh, and, penetrating the bone, dries up the very marrow. It burns. “Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?”—if not, how could a soul receive the fiery baptism of the Holy Spirit, unconscious of it? Ah, fancy not that it is to sinners only that “our God is a consuming fire.” He is a consuming fire to his people—not to their souls, but to their sins; destroying the unholy passions and habits which bind those whom he has chosen for himself out of a world that lieth in wickedness. Nor are these bonds burned in a way as painless as were those of the three Hebrews whom Nebuchadnezzar cast into the fiery furnace. They were suffering for God, not for sin; and preserved by Christ's presence, like his people in corresponding trials, they walked right pleasantly on burning coals, and found the flames as fresh as the breath of morning. If you have never felt pain, be assured that you

have never parted with sin—nothing short of burning out removes it. Yet, painful as it may be, throw open your bosom to this fiery baptism. What wounds it inflicts, shall be healed ; there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there.

2. In this translation both God and man are active.

When the hour of our Lord's ascension had come, he rose from Olivet neither on angel's wings, nor in the prophet's fiery chariot. He put forth no effort—his body, as if belonging to another sphere, floated buoyant, upward through the air, in the attitude of blessing his disciples, until a cloud received him out of their sight. In this easy and glorious manner no man rises from nature into grace ; or leaves the horrible pit to enter on the light, and love, and liberty of a son of God. There is help afforded on God's part ; but there is also an effort required on ours. We must climb the ladder which divine love lets down.

The soul is not, as some allege, a piece of softened wax ; receiving the image of God as that receives the impress of a seal. Salvation is a gift ; still, we must put forth our hand for it, as the starving for a loaf of bread ; as he who dies of thirst for a cup of water ; as a drowning man for the rope, which he eagerly eyes and rapidly seizes,

clinging to it with a grasp that neither his weight nor the waves can loose.

“Between us and you,” said Abraham to the rich man, “there is a great gulf fixed ; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence ;” and a gulf as impassable and profound separates the state of sin from the state of grace. No quantity or quality of good works that we may throw in, can raise a path across for guilty feet. Rubbish at the best, these are lost in its unfathomed depths—like the stones which travellers in Iceland cast into the black, yawning, volcanic chasms, which, descending into the fiery bowels of that burning land, no line measures, and time never fills. Yet, blessed be Christ’s name ! the “great gulf” has been bridged ; redemption spans the chasm ; an open way invites the sinner’s feet. And would to God we saw men seizing that opportunity of escape, as when bayonets are bristling on the heights, and the shot is plunging amid its disordered ranks, and clouds of cavalry are cutting down the stragglers, an army in retreat makes for the bridge ! What activity, what energy, what shouts and cries for help in such a crisis, such a terrific scene !—they cast away their baggage ; everything is sacrificed for life ; husbands dragging

on their wives, fathers carrying helpless children, brother raising up wounded brother, the cry of all is, the bridge, the bridge! And as the iron hail rattles among their flying squadrons, save where the rear-guard faces round on the foe and gallantly covers the retreat, every man forces on his way; until, the living wave surging forward on the bridge, it is choked with fugitives. Who thinks of sitting down there, and waiting a more convenient season; waiting till the press and crowd is over? They may envy the bird that, scared from her nest, darts through the sulphureous cloud, and wings her rapid way high over the swollen flood, but who sits down there in the idle hope that God will send some eagle from her rocky cliff, or angel from the skies, to bear the loiterer across? None. Each man is on his feet. He throws himself into the crowd; seizes every opening in the dense, desperate, maddened throng, to reach the front; nor relaxes the strain of his utmost efforts, till he stand in safety on the other side—blessing the man that bridged the stream.

Is not God, it may be asked, sovereign and omnipotent? as such, does he not sometimes save those who are not seeking to be saved? and send them back to pray who came to the church to scoff? True, all true. He may set aside the ordi-

nary laws of grace, as he did those of nature, when at his bidding iron swam, and flames were cool, and the flinty rock yielded drink, and the blue skies gave not dews but corn, and unstable water stood up in walls like adamant. But in the ordinary course of providence, God works in grace as in nature—to use a common but expressive adage, He helps the man who helps himself. Even the young bird chips its own shell, raising its voice in a feeble cry for liberty before it bursts its prison walls ; and when I have watched an insect—about to enter on a new existence, and come forth in resplendent beauty to spend its days in sunbeams, and sleep away the summer nights in the soft bosom of a flower, what violent exertions have I seen it make to shuffle off its worm case? Instinct teaches the lowest creatures to exert themselves ; and in the common affairs of life, providence teaches man to exert himself. The blessing is on the busy—he reaps harvests who tills his fields ; and sickles flash, and sheaves stand thick where ploughs have gone. The story even of Christ's miracles teaches the same lesson. Who were the lame he healed, but those who crawled to him on their knees, or crept to him on crutches, or got kind friends to bear them on beds and break through house-roofs, that they might reach his

presence? Who were the blind whose eyes he opened, but those who leaped to their feet and followed him, when, by the hum and rush of the crowd, they knew that the Saviour was near? Be these your pattern. Allow no difficulties about this or that doctrine to hinder you from giving instant attention, and earnest obedience, to these plain commandments, Pray without ceasing—Labour for the bread that never perisheth—Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure—Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Why is it that many, that perhaps you, are not saved? “Will the Lord cast off for ever; and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?” Is heaven full? Has the cry ceased, “Yet there is room?” Has the blood of Christ lost its efficacy, or the heart of God its pity? No. Men carefully preserve gold and jewels, but throw away their souls, as of no value;—they are not saved; but why? They give themselves no trouble; take no pains to be saved. This

change is indeed a birth ; but it is not like that where the pangs are all the mother's. This change is a translation ; but it is not as Elijah's, when that deathless man stepped into the chariot, and angels shook the reins, and horses of fire whirled him at his ease upward to heaven. I am persuaded that many more would be saved, if fewer abused the doctrines of man's depravity, and God's free, sovereign, saving grace. It is the gospel, that Without shedding of blood there is no remission ; it is the gospel, that Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ; it is the gospel, that Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; but remember, I pray you, that according to the same gospel, those who receive are they who ask, and those who find are such as seek. The door opens to the knocking hand.

Redemption.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.—COLOSSIANS i. 14.

A GREAT traveller, who had visited all the capitals of Europe, and studied their most famous treasures of art, and, no stranger to nature's grandest scenery, had filled his ear with the roar, and his eye with the foaming cataract of Niagara, once declared, in my hearing, that near by it he had seen the finest sight he ever saw. He was crossing from the American to the Canadian shore; and the boat carried also a fugitive slave. The slave had burst his chain, and fled. Guided northwards by the pole-star, he had threaded his way through tangled forests and the poisonous swamp—outstripping the bloodhounds that bayed behind him, and followed long upon his track. About to realise his long-cherished and fondest hopes, to gratify his thirst for liberty, the swarthy negro stood erect in the bow of the boat; his large black eyes fixed on the shore. She nears it. But

ere her keel has grated on the strand, impatient to be free, he gathers up all his strength, bends for the spring, and, vaulting into the air, by one mighty bound, one glorious leap for liberty, he reaches the shore, and stands upon its bank—a free man.

The liberty for which that bondsman longed, and laboured, and braved so much, is perhaps the sweetest earthly cup man drinks. It has been said, that health is the greatest earthly blessing. It is a precious boon. How did the woman of the Gospels spend all in search of it ; and how would thousands, languishing on beds of sickness, and sinking into the grave under incurable maladies, buy it at as great a price ? Without health, what is money ? or luxury ? or rank and sounding titles ? or a crown, if it press throbbing brows and an aching head ? Yonder poor and humble cottager, browned by the sun, with health glowing on his unshaven cheek, seated at his simple board, uncovering his head to wipe the honest sweat from his brow, or bless the God who feeds him and his little ones, might be an object of envy to many. In vain they court coy sleep on beds of down, and try by costly luxuries to whet a failing appetite—sighing, they say, what is money without health ? True, but he who knows what it is to be a slave

will ask, what is health without liberty—health in chains?

We sympathize even with the lower animals in their strong, instinctive love of freedom—the bounding, noisy joy of the dog when off his chain; the sudden change on the weary horse, when, shaking off fatigue with his harness, he tosses his head, and, with buoyant spirits and flowing mane, careers amid his fellows over the pasture field. It moves our pity to see an eagle chained to the perch, and, as she expands her broad wings, turn up a longing eye to the clouds they shall never more cleave, to the bright blue skies where she shall never soar. I have felt a deeper sympathy with this noble, free-born denizen of the air, that, pining for its native haunts, declines its food, refuses to be tamed, and, dashing against the bars, dies—strangled in struggles to escape, than with the tamed and gentle captive which takes its food from some fair jailer's hand, and sings the song of golden moors and green woodlands within an iron cage.

Much more do we sympathize with our fellow-creatures—those Hebrew exiles, for instance, who hung their harps on the willows, nor could sing Sion's songs in a strange land; with all, slaves or citizens, who have made the altars of Liberty red

with their blood, preferring death to bondage. If I can judge from the interest with which I once watched the progress, and all but wished for the escape, of a man, who, with the officers of justice at his heels, was running a race for freedom, unless the offence is one which nature taught us to avenge, it would cost a struggle between our sense of duty as subjects, and our sympathy with man's love of liberty, to arrest a runaway prisoner. - But who would arrest a runaway slave? Who, that ever tasted the sweets of liberty, would not help him? What is the colour of his skin to me? He is a brother wronged, cruelly oppressed; nor were he a man who would not, espousing the side of innocent weakness against tyrannous strength, hide him, and feed him, and lodge him, and help him, from chains and stripes and slavery, on to freedom.

If so, who would be himself a slave? What value should we set on health if we had to rise to our work in the rice swamp, in the cane or cotton-field, at the sound of the horn; and were driven to it, like oxen, with the crack of the whip? Health! what value would a man set on life itself, were his children to be torn from his arms, exposed to auction, and, knocked down to the highest bidder, sold before his eyes into slavery; if he must stand by and hear their mother's shrieks, as on bended

knees and with outstretched hands she implores, and in vain implores, for pity ; stand by, and hear his own mother cry for mercy, as the breast that nursed him bleeds under the cutting lash ; if he must stand by, nor speak a word, nor shed a tear, nor heave one groan from his bursting bosom, nor lift a hand in their defence, who would value life a straw ? How sad to think that there are lands, governed by Christian men in the prostituted name of liberty, where such scenes are witnessed, and crimes so foul are done ! It almost tempts one to pray that an avenging Heaven would wither and blast the fields that are watered with human tears : —“ Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings.” May God give America grace to wipe from its shield so black a stain !

With these sentiments you, no doubt, sympathize ; but I have to tell you of a worse and more degrading, a more cruel and dreadful slavery. There are among us many greater, and more to be pitied, slaves—servants of Satan, who are sold unto sin. Would to God that we set the same high price on spiritual as we do on earthly liberty ! Ah then, what efforts would be put forth, what long struggles made, what earnest, unwearying prayers offered for salvation ; and, saved ourselves,

how anxiously should we labour to save others ! In the touching narrative of a fugitive slave I have read how, when he himself had escaped, the thought of his mother—a mother dear—and sisters still in bondage, haunted him night and day, embittering the sweetness of his own cup. He found no rest. Liberty to him was little else than a name, until they were free. And surely one may wonder how Christians can give God rest, or take it to themselves, while those near and dear to them remain in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Why is it, moreover, that when Christ's servants appear, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, so few hearts leap for joy ; so many hear it as if they needed it not, heard it not, heeded it not—with calm, cold, frigid indifference ? Proclaim emancipation in a land of slaves, and the news shall fly like wildfire—sweep on like flames over the summer prairie ; at the glad tidings the bed-ridden leaps from his couch ; the lame throws away his crutches ; the old grow young ; the people go mad with joy ; mothers with new feelings kiss their babes, and press them to their bosoms ; brothers, sisters, friends, rush into each other's arms, to congratulate themselves that they are free ; and, weeping the first tears of joy

their eyes have shed, they make hut and hall, forest and mountain, ring with the name of him who had fought their long, hard battle, nor relaxed his efforts till he had achieved their freedom. Jesus! with what jubilant songs, then, should we celebrate thy sacred name, and enshrine thy memory in our best affections? What great, glad tidings these, redemption through thy blood? O that God would inspire us with such love of it, and give us so great enjoyment in it, that with some foretaste of the joys, we might sing this song of heaven, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

In directing your attention to this subject, I remark—

I. That we all need redemption.

To a man nigh unto death, who is labouring under some known and deadly malady, offer a medicine which has virtue to cure him, and he will buy it at any price; in his eyes the drug is worth all the gold on earth. But offer that, which he seizes, to one who believes himself to be in good and perfect health, and he holds it cheap.

Just so, and for a similar reason, the Saviour and his redemption are slighted, despised, and rejected of many. They have no adequate conception of their lost state as sinners, nor feel, therefore, their need of salvation. The first work, accordingly, of God's Holy Spirit in conversion is to rouse man from the torpor which the poison of sin—like that of a snake infused into his veins, produces ; to convince him of his guilt, and make him sensible of his misery. And blessed the book, blessed the preacher, blessed the providence that sends that conviction into our hearts ; and lodges it, like a barbed arrow, there. For to an awakened and alarmed conscience, how welcome the Saviour ! Let a man, who felt secure, see himself to be in great danger, discover that he is a poor, polluted, perishing sinner, lost, under sentence of death, deserving the wrath of God, separated from hell only by a crust of earth which, growing thinner and thinner as the fire eats it away, already bends and cracks beneath his feet, ah ! he understands the import of the words, "Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious." That Christ may be precious to you, that the grace which bringeth salvation may not come to you in vain, let me show that all require to be redeemed from the slavery of sin and Satan. And I remark—

1. This slavery is the natural state of man.

We pity the mother, as one robbed of a mother's best joys, who knows that the infant on her bosom is a slave, and only smiles because unconscious of its sad estate. But its calamity and curse are ours. The progeny of slaves are slaves ; and we, having sprung from parents who, in the expressive language of Scripture, had sold themselves for nought, leave our mother's womb in bondage to sin—therefore David says, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Let me recall to your recollection the testimony of one who, so far as civil liberty and Roman citizenship were concerned, was free born. You know how Paul stood on his rights as a Roman ; daring them to scourge him as they would a slave. Yet, speaking of himself, as before God and in the eye of a holy law, he says, I am carnal, *sold* under sin ; and, not to multiply examples—in these terms he addresses his converts, "Ye were the servants," or, as we should express it, the slaves, "of sin." The slaves ! Observe, I pray you, that the word which is there translated servant, means not a servant simply, but one who is a slave ; not one hired for a fixed period, whom the next term sets free to leave or stay, but a bondsman, a serf, branded with the mark of perpetual bondage. Such

is the true import of the word where the apostle says, "God be thanked that ye were the *servants* of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." David employs still stronger terms ; in one of his psalms, using this bold and humbling figure, "I was as a beast before thee." And, though few have the deep sense of sin which humbled that holy man, no child of God can recall the past—what he was, and how he felt antecedent to his conversion, on that blessed day when the truth made him free, without being ready to acknowledge that he was in bonds. Not master of himself, nor free to follow the dictates of conscience and of God's word, he slaved in the service of the devil, the world, and the flesh—three hard taskmasters. On that ever memorable day fetters stronger than iron were struck from his limbs.

I do not affirm that the most advanced saint is altogether free from the bondage of sin. No. The holiest believer retains that which painfully reminds him of his old condition. I have seen a dog which had broken loose and restored itself to liberty, dragging the chain, or some links of it, along with him ; I have read of brave, stout captives

breaking out of prison, but bringing away with them, in swollen joints and long-festering wounds, the marks of the cruel fetters ; and thus some things belonging to his old sinful state will continue to hang about a man even after grace has delivered him from their dominant power. Who has not felt these calling for constant watchfulness, and earnest prayer ? Who does not need to resort daily to the fountain of cleansing ; to wash his heart in the blood of Christ oftener than he washes his hands in water ? We require to be renewed day by day ; converted, as it were, not once, or twice, but—every day. Sin remains within the heart ; and the happiness of a child of God lies mainly in this, that it has ceased to reign there : and that, at length made perfect in holiness, he shall enter, though by death's dismal gate, into the full and glorious liberty of the children of God.

2. This slavery is the universal state of man.

Both sacred and profane history show that slavery, as it is one of the worst, is one of the oldest institutions. At an early period of man's history, Cain, who should have been his brother's keeper, became his murderer ; and when, afterwards, man did become his brother's keeper, alas ! it was too often, as an owner rather than as a guardian, to sell, and buy, and oppress him ; long,

very long ago, making men and women, with broken hearts, turn a wishful eye on the grave—that welcome refuge, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest. But while there might be lands that slavery never cursed, and there were in every slave land a number who were free, the slavery of sin spared no land, and no order. There are no “free-soilers” among mankind, so far as sin is concerned. It has exempted no class, neither the king on his throne nor the beggar on his dunghill. The loveliest woman as much as the vilest outcast, the proudest peer and poorest peasant, the man of letters and the most ignorant savage, Jew and Greek, bond and free—all, like the gang of miserable captives whom the slave-dealer is driving to the sea-board, are moving on to eternity, bound in one long chain ; with every minor distinction sunk in one common misery, all are sold under sin. In this one calamity differences of race, rank, and colour are merged. Every man’s heart is black—whatever his face may be.

It matters little—indeed, nothing before God—whether man has a dark or pale face ; but it is all-important whether, or not, he has a black heart ; whether our souls have, or have not, been washed white in the blood of Jesus Christ. What avails it that you are not bound in fetters of man’s

forging, if you are bound in the devil's chain? The difference, yonder, between the white master with his blood-stained lash, and the poor, trembling, crouching black, over whom he cracks it, is lost in this, that both are under bondage to sin; and I dare to say that of the two, the blacker, baser slave is he, who, boasting of his freedom and proud of his race and colour, holds a brother in chains. The driver is more and worse enslaved than the driven; the oppressor than the oppressed; for what chain forged by human hands for human limbs so strong, degrading, hateful in the sight of God, as the monstrous avarice which breeds human beings, like cattle, for the market; and grasps at wealth, although its price be groans, and tears, and blood, and broken hearts?

3. This slavery is the actual state of all unconverted men.

Some are slaves of one, and some of another sin; the forms of slavery being as many and varied as the sins to which people are addicted. Let me give a few examples.

(1.) Some are slaves of gold. How they drudge for it!—the love of money ruling them with a rod of iron. Naturally kind, they feel disposed to assist the poor; but their master says, No; and with iron heel he crushes the tenderest feelings of

their heart. Visited occasionally with solemn thoughts, and not altogether dead to the claims of Christ, they would sacrifice some of their wealth to his cause ; but what is Christ to Mammon ? Again their master says, No—you must make money, still more money ; toil on, ye slaves ; you may not trust man, and you cannot trust God ; to your task ; you must die rich—leaving a fortune for heirs to quarrel about over your grave, or squander in folly and dissipation. And thus, blushing at his mean excuse, the poor wretch—for I call him poor who has money which he cannot use—sends Christ away sorrowful to beg with more success at a poor, or less wealthy door. Talk of slaves and slave-masters ! What bondage like that which condemns a man to do what he condemns himself for doing ; to harden his heart against the claims of pity ; to deny his own flesh and blood ; to lie, cheat, and defraud ; or, at least every day of his life to run counter to the divine saying, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? From such bondage, good Lord deliver us ! “Thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness ;” “fight the good fight of faith ;” and, like gold which a drowning man will drop to clutch the rope flung from

ship or shore, let go the world, and with hands set free, lay hold on eternal life.

(2.) Some are the slaves of lust. To what base society does it condemn them?—to what acts of meanest treachery and blackest villany are they driven by their tyrant passions? Think of man drowning his conscience; effacing from his soul the most distinct remaining traces of the image of God! Of all sinners, the slaves of their passions are most like their master—the fiend who changed himself into a serpent, with lying tongue and smooth glittering skin to win a woman's trust. Serpent-like, they creep into the bosom they design to sting; serpent-like, they put forth their power to fascinate some happy singing bird, and she goes fluttering, but, spell-bound, cannot help going, into their devouring jaws. Now, better be a slave, or die heart-broken, than be a heart-breaker. The thief—the mean, sneaking thief—who steals my money, is a man of honour compared with him who steals the treasure of a woman's virtue, and robs a household of its peace.

(3.) Some are slaves of drunkenness. Of all slavery this is the most helpless, and most hopeless. Other sins drown conscience, but this drowns reason and conscience too. More, perhaps, than any other vice, it blots out the vestiges of God's

image, and reduces man to the lowest degradation—beneath a beast. It smites with greatest impotency ; for in such slavery as is iron to a magnet, is the poor besotted drunkard to his cup. The slave of man may retain his self-respect ; cherish his wife, and love his children ; and, raising his fettered hands in prayer to heaven, preserve, and in his very chains present, the image of God. But yonder wretch, with beggary hung on his back, and dissipation stamped on his bloated face ; dead to shame, or hanging his head, and passing old acquaintances with averted eye ; degraded before the world, and expelled from the communion of the church ; lying in the gutter ; or beating his wife, or cursing his flying children, and in his sober moments cursing himself—he is a slave indeed. What hope for him who reels up to the bar of judgment, and staggers drunk into his Maker's presence ? Let his fate excite your fears as well as pity. Paul says, " Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall ; " and have not I seen some, whose spring budded with the fairest promises, live to be a shame, and sorrow, and deep disgrace ? And, though it were revealed from heaven that you yourself should never fall, is there nothing due to others ? Does not that bloody cross, with its blessed victim, call on every Chris-

tian to live not to himself, but to think of other's things, as well as of his own? Every man must judge for himself; to his own master he standeth or he falleth. But when I think of the beggary, and misery, and shame, and crime, and sorrow, of which drunkenness is the prolific mother; of the many hearts it breaks, of the happy homes it curses, of the precious souls it ruins; I do not hesitate to say that the question of total abstinence deserves our prayerful consideration; moreover, that he appears to me to consult most the glory of God, the honour of Jesus, and the best interests of his fellow-men, who applies to all intoxicating stimulants the apostolic rule, "Touch not, taste not, handle not." In regard to no sin is it more true, or so true, "Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

(4.) Some are slaves to the opinions of the world. So, while the Macedonian boasted that he had conquered the world, the world can boast that it has conquered them; and theirs is the miserable condition of a servant, who, in some ill-governed household, has to bear the caprices, not of one mistress, but of many. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; but the fear of man bringeth a snare—and thus many of the young are

ruined, because they cannot pluck up courage to say Nay—to do what they know to be right—but allow themselves to be laughed out of their virtuous habits, and early, holy training. Then, into what misery do parents, conforming to the extravagant habits of others, and launching out on the whirlpool of fashion, plunge themselves and their families? To sacrifice the well-being of children to a wretched vanity, to do mean or dishonest things that you may appear genteel, to prefer the approbation of the world to that of your own conscience, to incur the wrath of God that you may win a man's or woman's smiles, to stand more in dread of the hiss of dying men than of the deadly serpent—this slavery to the world is one which Christ's freemen should not yield to—no, not for an hour. Hear how God asks, “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord, thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?”

Yet see, how men of the noblest genius and proudest intellect have crouched, slave-like, before the world—laying their heads in the dust at her feet. Byron, for instance, when he stood on the pinnacle of his fame, confessed that the disappro-

bation of the meanest critic gave him more pain than the applause of others gave him pleasure. Miserable confession! Miserable man! not less a slave that laurels wreathed his brow, and a star glittered on his breast. What a contrast to him, the apostle Paul! He was a freeman! Like some tall rock, see how he stands erect—unmoved from his place, or purpose, or judgment, or resolution, by the storm of a world's disapprobation, raging fiercely around him. "With me," he says, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; . . . he that judgeth me is the Lord." What moral grandeur! What a testimony to the elevating power of piety! What a glorious illustration of the poet's words,

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides."

In old times, men and women were said to have sold themselves to Satan; consenting that he should have their souls at death, on condition that he granted them, in their lifetime, any wealth, or honours, or pleasures, they might desire. As the story goes, the Enemy held them to the bargain: and, when they died, the old castle shook, and screech-owls hooted, and dogs howled, and lights burned blue, and tempests roared, and

people crossed themselves as they heard the shrieking spirit borne away through the black night to hell. An old superstition! True; yet fables are often less wonderful than facts; and things more incredible happen in real life than you or I read in the wildest romance. Satan, according to these old legends, drove a hard bargain; but with sinners, now, he drives a harder. Deluded, defrauded, cheated, the poor sinner has no lifetime of profit and pleasure. He sells himself for nought. I could fill this house with living proofs of it from these streets, where they swarm in rags and wretchedness. And what though many, who live in sin, are apparently happy and prosperous? If their hearts had a window whereby we could look within, and see the fears that agitate them, the gnawing of remorse, the stings of conscience, the apprehensions of discovery and impending evil that haunt the steps and cloud the path of guilt, we should conclude that, though there were neither a hell nor a hereafter, "the way of transgressors is hard." From their way I pray all to turn. Why will ye die? Why? with Christ willing, wishful, waiting to save. Sin's is a miserable thralldom. If its wretched slaves, you are the objects of deepest compassion; nor ever more so than when, intoxicated with the pleasant but poisoned cup,

you sing, and laugh, and dance in chains. To men in your circumstances, with your appalling prospects, how may we apply the words, "I said of laughter, It is mad ; and of mirth, What doeth it ?" God help you ! God bring you to a better mind ! that, raising your fettered arms and weeping eyes for heaven's help to burst these bonds, you may be free ; blessed with holy liberty, and true peace, and pure pleasure, and lasting joys ; redeemed and ransomed by the blood of Christ.

Christ the Redeemer.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.—COLOSSIANS i. 14.

NO place touches us with a more melancholy sense of the fleeting nature of earthly glory, than an old deserted castle. All is gone but the main keep—stoutly battling with time; as one not easily subdued, it stands erect amid the grass-green mounds, that, like graves of the past, show where other buildings once had stood. Grey with moss, or mantled with ivy, the strong walls are slowly mouldering amid the desolation that reigns in these silent courts. No step but our own treads the floor that shook in other days to dancers' feet; nor sound is heard in halls which once rung with music, and sweet voices, and merry laughter, but the moaning wind, which seems to wail for the wreck around it, or the sudden rush of some startled bird which our intrusion scares from her lonely nest. If happily an empty chain hangs rusting in the dungeon where captives once had

pined, how cold the hearth around whose roaring fires, in long winter nights, many a tale was told, and many bright groups had gathered, and the mother nursed her babe, and the father told his bright brave boys of stirring scenes in flood and field! In the grass-grown court below, where once they mustered gay for the bridal, or grim for battle, the sheep quietly feed. And here on the giddy battlement, some pine, or birch, or mountain-ash, rooted in a crevice and fed by decay, lifts its stunted form, where the banner of an ancient house floated proudly in days of old, or spread itself out, defiant, as the fight raged around the beleaguered walls, and the war-cry of assailants without was answered by the bold cheers of the retainers within. Now all is changed—the stage a ruin; spectators and actors gone. They sleep in the grave; their loves and wars, their fears, and joys, and sorrows—where ours soon shall be—buried in cold oblivion.

“Their memory and their name is gone.

Alike unknowing and unknown.”

And, greatest change of all, the heirs of those who reared that massy pile, and rode helmed to battle with a thousand vassals at their back, have sunk amid the wrecks of fortune. Fallen into meanness

and obscurity, as humble rustics, they now, perhaps, plough the lands which once their fathers owned.

Such changes have happened in our country, and in many others ; but never any corresponding to them in ancient Israel. It was there, as in the heavens, whose luminaries return periodically to the same place in the firmament, and the same relative position to each other. The sun, for instance—although changing his place daily—shall rise and set twelve months hence, at the same hour, and in the same spot, as to-day. Like that, or the revolution which restores every spoke of a wheel to its former place, society among the old Hebrews—whatever change had taken place in personal liberty or hereditary property—returned to the state in which it stood at the commencement of the fifty years, whose close brought in the jubilee. “Then,” said Moses, “shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof ; it shall be a jubilee unto you ; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.”

In consequence either of his crimes or his mis-

fortunes, the Hebrew was occasionally forced to part with his paternal estate. His was sometimes a still greater calamity ; he might lose not his property only, but his liberty, becoming the bond-servant of some more fortunate brother. So matters stood till the fiftieth year arrived, and the jubilee was blown. At that trumpet sound—how fondly anticipated ! how gladly heard !—the fetters drop from his limbs, and the slave of yesterday is a freeman ; at that trumpet-sound the beggar doffs his rags, and the weary labourer throws down his tools. Marriage-bells never rang so merrily. And as, blown with the breath of liberty, trumpet replied to trumpet, and the jubilee, rising from valley to mountain, echoed among the vine-clad hills, and spread itself over the land from beyond Jordan to the sea-shore, from snowy Lebanon to the burning desert, every man bade adieu to beggary, and wandering, and exile ; like parted streams, divided families were reunited ; estates returned to their original owners ; and, amid universal rejoicings, feastings, mirth, music, and dances, every man returned to spend the rest of his days in his father's house, and, at death, mingle his own with ancestral dust. What a singular institution ! As a civil arrangement, checking both excessive wealth and excessive poverty, it was without a parallel in

any ancient or modern nation. But it was more ; it was a symbolical institution, which, while a great social blessing, had a deep, holy, spiritual meaning. Celebrated on that great day of atonement, when the goat, typical of Jesus, bore away the sins of the people, it was the symbol of a better restitution and a better redemption ; being, in fact, a striking, very beautiful, and most benignant figure of redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins.

Before turning your attention to the redemption, of which the jubilee was such a remarkable figure, let me by way of warning remark—

I. Our redemption is not, like that of the Hebrews, a simple matter of time.

Every fifty, and in certain cases every seven years, redeemed the Hebrew, restoring him to the possession and enjoyment of his property. “If thy brother,” said God, “an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years ; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty.” Thus, time set the Hebrew free. Everywhere, and in its most ordinary-course, it

works many changes—the young grow old, and raven locks grow grey; the poor rise into wealth, while the rich sink into poverty; old families disappear, and new ones start up, like mushrooms. Diversifying the condition of society with every turn of the wheel of fortune, Time is changing the form of this great globe itself. The proudest mountains bend before his sceptre, and yield to his silent but resistless sway. Nor is there a tiny stream that trickles over the rock, and, often hid under the broad fern, and nodding grasses, and wild flowers on its banks, betrays itself only by the gentle murmur with which it descends, singing, to join the river that rolls its tribute onward to the ocean, but—teaching us in the highest matters not to despise the day of small things—is wearing down the mountain and filling up the sea. Through its agencies of heat and cold, dews and rains, summer showers and winter snows, time is remodelling the features of our world, and—perhaps in symbol of the progress and future condition of society—reducing its various inequalities to one great common level.

But amid these changes shall years alter, as a matter of course, the condition of a sinner?—redeem him, for instance, from spiritual slavery, or even relax its chains? In the course of time you will

grow older ; but not of necessity better. On the contrary, while the Hebrew slave, by every year and day he lived, was brought nearer to redemption, and could say, On such a day and at such an hour I shall be free, it is a solemn and awful fact, that the longer you live in sin, the more distant, more difficult, more hopeless, your salvation becomes—"the last state of that man is worse than the first." Let us not flatter ourselves with the common hope, I shall grow better as I grow older. A most improbable event ! The unconverted are much less likely to be saved at the age of fifty than at five-and-twenty—in their seventieth than in their seventh year ; "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !" Do you reply, But what then am I to do?—Can I redeem myself? Assuredly not. But are we, because we can be redeemed only through the blood of Christ, to sit still ; and act as if redemption would arrive like a jubilee, in the common course of providence, or time, or nature ? We are to be up and doing ; since, in a sense, it is as true of a soul's as of a nation's liberty—

"Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow."

I do not say that we are to rise like an oppressed nation which wrests its liberties from a

tyrant's hand ; or that we can purchase redemption, as our country with its millions bought the freedom of West Indian slaves ; or that through works of righteousness that we do or have done, we can establish any claim whatever to its blessings. By care and industry you may acquire goods, but not goodness ; money, but never merit—merit in the sight of God. And yet I say, in God's name, “labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life ;” “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ;” “give diligence to make your calling and election sure ;” “take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.” There are various ways of being diligent—one man, seated at the loom, is busy with the shuttle ; another at the desk, with his pen ; another in the field at his plough ; another bends to the oar, and, ploughing the deep, reaps his harvest on the stormy waters ; another, seen through the smoke of battle, strains all his energies on the bloody field to win honours with the bayonet's rush and at the cannon's mouth. And, though men may call him idle, yonder poor beggar, orphan child or

infirm old man, who claims our pity and reproves our indolence, is also busy ; diligent as the others. His hand is not idle, it is busy knocking ; nor are his feet, they bear him from house to house, from door to door ; nor is his tongue, it pleads his poverty, and tells his tale of sorrow ; while, pressed by necessity and earnest of purpose, out of his hollow eyes he throws such looks of misery, as kindle pity and melt the heart.

And such as that suppliant's, along with the use of other means, are the labours and diligence, to which God's mercy and your necessities call you. Unable to save yourselves, be it yours to besiege with prayers the throne of grace. Learn from Simon Peter what to do, and where to turn ; not Peter asleep in the garden, but Peter sinking in the sea, where, though he had learned in boyhood to breast the billow, and feel at home upon the deep, he makes no attempt to swim. The shore lies beyond his reach, nor can boldest swimmer live amid these swelling waters ; his companions cannot save him—their boat, unmanageable, drifts before the gale, and they cannot save themselves. He turns his back on them ; directs nor look nor cry to them ; but, fixing his eyes on that form which, calm, unmoved, steps majestically on from billow to billow, the drowning man throws

out his arms, and cries to Jesus, "Lord, save me." He did not cry in vain. Nor shall you. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost; and never said unto any of the sons of men, Seek ye me in vain. He offered his soul for sin, and came to redeem us from all iniquity. Let us now

II. Consider Christ as the Redeemer—not as *a* Redeemer, but *the* Redeemer.

There is no other; "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." All the types and symbols of the Saviour teach this. There was but one ark in the flood, and all perished save those who sailed in it. There was but one altar in the temple; and no sacrifices were accepted but those offered there—"the altar," as the Bible says, that "sanctified the gift." There was but one way through the Red Sea; and only where its waters, held back by the hand of God, stood up in crystal walls, was a passage opened for those that were ready to perish. And even so, there is but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"—as our catechism says, "the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ."

This truth is, in a sense, and to some extent,

acknowledged by all Christian churches. All profess to give Jesus the honours of salvation ; not excepting, on the one hand, those which, denying the divinity of our Lord and the doctrine of the atonement, draw its life out of the gospel, nor, on the other hand, those Greek and Roman churches, which, by their additions and traditions, have buried the Rock of Ages beneath mounds of rubbish. While, however, all churches appear to regard our Lord as the Redeemer, and seem to travel on in company, no sooner is the question started, in what sense he is a Redeemer, than a point is reached where they take different paths, and are led, as they advance, more and more widely asunder. That question introduces us into a great controversy. I do not intend to enter on it ; but will only affirm, that whether the weapons were sword, pen, or tongue, no conflict affecting the sacred cause of liberty, the rights of man, or the honour and interests of nations, ever involved such important, vital, transcendent consequences, as are staked in the battle that is waged around Christ's cross, and about the question, how he saves ; in what sense he is a Redeemer ?

The first and most notable champion who appears on this field, is Paul, the apostle ; and as, panoplied from head to heel in the armour of God,

he stalks into the arena, and, looking undaunted around him, is ready to die for the truth, observe the motto on his shield, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." It is not simply Jesus Christ—though, given by an angel and full of meaning, that was a great name—nor Christ come ; nor Christ coming ; nor even Christ crowned ; but Christ dying on a cross, "Christ, and him crucified." Life through a Saviour's death, salvation by substitution, redemption through blood—that blood the ransom, and Jesus the Redeemer—was the substance of all Paul's sermons ; the theme of his praise ; the deep-rooted and most cherished hope of his heart. In this faith he lived and died ; and, though that tongue of power and eloquence be now silent in the grave, he proclaims to angels in heaven what he preached to men on earth. The theme of his old sermons is the burden of his new song ; for in that serene world, where no storms disturb the church, nor controversies rage, nor clouds obscure the light, they sing salvation by the blood of Christ. And if we cast away all other hope, to embrace this with faith and our whole hearts, we also shall one day join the vast congregation whose voices fell on John's ear like the sound of many waters, as, in harmonious numbers and to golden harps, they sung

before the throne, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

And for a fuller understanding and appreciation of this doctrine, I remark—

1. Christ does not redeem us, as some allege, by simply revealing the truth—save us by merely shewing us the way of salvation.

The pathways on the deep along our rugged coasts are lighted like our streets. Yonder where the sea frets and foams and breaks above the sunken rock, the tall lighthouse rises; and, kindled at sundown, shines steady and clear through the gloom of night to show the helmsman the danger he has to avoid, and the course he has to steer. Now he who, rearing that house and kindling its blessed light, has saved many a bark from shipwreck and sailor from a watery grave, may be called a saviour. And in one sense he does save all those who, ploughing their way through the black night over the stormy deep, hail that light, as it rises on them like a star of hope—and sighting it, know how to beware the reef, to clear the bar, to take the roads, and bring their bark safely to the desired haven. But if Christ is a Saviour only in that sense, if he saves us simply by bringing life and immortality to light, he is not the only Saviour; he ceases to be "the Sun of Righteousness;" becoming one of the

many luminaries of the church, he is only a pure, and bright, and beautiful star in that brilliant constellation, which is formed of Moses, the prophets, those seers and sages and inspired apostles, whose voices and pens communicated God's will to man in the days of old.

Many of those, indeed, whom God inspired to reveal his will to men, had more to do instrumentally in revealing it than Christ himself. No book bears his name; he wrote no epistle; and the truths that actually dropped from his lips form but a small portion of those Scriptures which are both our chart and charter. Yet who but he is set forth as *the* Redeemer and Saviour of sinners?—where is Moses represented as such? or David? or Isaiah? or Paul?—where is it said, Believe on Paul, and thou shalt be saved? whosoever believeth on Paul or Peter, hath everlasting life, and shall never perish? Nevertheless, see how much more Paul did in actually revealing the will of God to men, than our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus preached three years; but Paul thirty—Jesus preached only to Jews; but Paul to Jew, and Greek, and Roman, Parthian, Scythian, barbarian, bond and free—Jesus numbered his converts by hundreds; Paul his by thousands—Jesus confined his labours to the narrow limits of Palestine; Paul overleaped all such

bounds ; taking the wide world for his field, and flying as on angel's wings, he preached the Gospel alike to the bearded Jew, the barbarians of Melita, the philosophers of Athens, and in the streets and palaces of Rome to the conquerors of the world. Yet look at this great apostle ! He lies as low at Jesus' feet as the woman who washed them with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head ; he wore chains for Christ, and gloried in them ; never was queen so proud of her diamond coronet, nor man in office of his chain of gold, as he of the iron manacles he wore for Christ, and boldly shook in the face of kings. To serve the cause of Jesus he could submit to be beaten, scourged, starved, stoned, and cast to hungry lions at Ephesus ; but one thing he could not bear—grief and horror seize him when he finds himself set on a level with his master. On a church, rent by factions and full of partisanship, where one cries, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, and a third, I am of Cephas, and a fourth, I am of Christ, he turns round to ask with indignation—“Is Christ divided ? was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ?” In whatever others may glory, he ascribes the glory of redemption to the cross ; and rebuking the party spirit and respect for human authority still

too prevalent in christian churches, he exclaims —“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. Our Lord does not redeem us, as some allege, simply by his example.

He who leads me safely along any dangerous path is, in a sense, my saviour. The guide, for instance, who, high up on the beetling precipice, and appearing to shuddering spectators like an insect creeping along its face, now plants the point of his foot in a crevice, now poises himself on a rocking stone, now, laying strong hand on friendly root or branch, swings round a projecting corner, now, with arms outstretched and lover's eagerness, embraces the rock, now steps lightly along the fallen tree that bridges a fearful chasm, and so shows me where to turn, and what to hold by, I regard—and on looking back at that tremendous path, and horrible abyss, with gratitude regard—as my saviour. Unless for him, I had never achieved the passage; but left my body to rot, and my unburied bones to bleach, in the depths of that dark ravine.

Such is the way, according to some, that our Lord redeems us; setting such an example of virtue, of patient endurance, of living, suffering, dying, that whosoever follows his steps shall arrive at the kingdom of heaven. Alas for our

safety! farewell, a long, last farewell, to the hope of heaven, if it rest on that. What a delusion! God knows, but for the everlasting arms which caught us when falling, and often raised us when fallen, but for the love that, flowing in daily tides, has, as it swept over them, blotted out a thousand sins, you and I, and all, had perished; perished long ago. Having fallen, we had never stopped falling farther, till, like a stone that, rolling down the hill-side and bounding from crag to crag, at length plunges into the lake with a sullen sound, we had sunk into hell. Follow Christ's example!—tread his footsteps!—live as he lived!—walk as he walked! Who is sufficient for these things? No mother ever bore such a son as Mary; in him only has a clean thing come out of an unclean. Death, who has darkened many a house, and church, and land, never put out such a light as Calvary saw quenched in blood; it was as if he had plucked the sun, and not a star, from heaven. This earth was never trod by such feet as walked the Sea of Galilee, and were nailed upon the cross; since after treading earth's foul paths for many long years, heaven received him back without spot or stain. He who lay three days in the grave, its prisoner but not its victim, his sacred form untouched by its corrupting finger, passed three-and-thirty years in a world that has been the grave of

holiness and virtue—amid corruption uncorrupted ; though a friend to harlots, the guest of publicans, and associated with sinners, holy, harmless, undefiled ; like oil among water, separate from sinners.

Again, I ask, who is sufficient for these things ? What man liveth and sinneth not ? Who has not often to cry—"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not ;" and, when once down, what stops him from going straight to hell, but the promise, which faith catches, holds, and hangs by, "I will heal their backsliding, and love them freely ?" We should attempt always to follow Jesus, to walk as he walked, speak as he spake, think as he thought, and mould our whole conduct and conversation on the pattern that he hath left us ; yet each new attempt will leave us more and more convinced that our only hope of salvation lies in the mercy of the Father, and the merits of the Son. Pray for, and make sure of, an interest in these ; for even after being made new creatures in Jesus Christ, the utmost we can do—nor that without the aids of the Holy Spirit—is, like children, to creep along the path which the Saviour walked ; to leave the mark of our knees where he left the prints of his feet.

3. Christ has redeemed us by suffering in our room and stead. Our ransom was his life ; the price of our redemption his blood.

“Without shedding of blood is no remission ;”
“the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” This is the grand truth, the central doctrine, the culminating point of the Gospel. It rises aloft above all others ; and like an Alpine summit, which stands up crowned with snows, and, piercing the blue skies to catch the earliest rays of the morning sun, be descried from afar, it caught the eyes and revived the heart of Adam and Eve amid the blasted bowers of Eden. . Not only was the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent’s head, but the serpent was to bite his heel. Salvation was to come, but through suffering ; and, as could only be, through the sufferings of a substitute. As a *substitute* for sinners Jesus was set forth in the old sacrifices of the altar ; and to one of these, as a graphic exhibition of the connection between blood shed and sin forgiven, let me request your attention.

The offering I refer to was made, and made thus, on the great day of atonement. Two young goats, kids of the goats, are selected from the flock. They are presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle, where they stand, in sight of the silent, solemn multitude, a double type of him who presented himself before Jehovah in the councils of eternity, saying, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy

will, O God." The lot is cast—one for the Lord, the other for the scapegoat—to determine which shall represent our Saviour in the act of his death, and which in the fruit of it, namely, the bearing away of the sins of the people. The first, which represents Christ in death, falls on the altar. The High Priest receives its blood in a golden bowl, and entering within the veil, sprinkles it upon and before the mercy-seat. Coming forth, he goes up to the living goat ; standing over it, he lays his hands upon its head ; amid solemn silence, he confesses over the dumb creature all the iniquities, and transgressions, and sins of the children of Israel ; and by these bloody hands and that holy prayer, he ceremonially transfers the guilt of the people to its devoted head. And now, observe the act which follows and foreshadows how Jesus, by taking our sins on himself, bore them all away. The vast crowd divides, forming a lane that stretches away from the tabernacle to the boundless desert. While every lip is dumb, and every eye intent upon the ceremony, a man steps forth—a "*fit*" man ; and, taking hold of the victim, he leads it on, and away, through the parted crowd. All eyes follow them ; till, amid the haze of the burning sands and distant horizon, their forms growing less and less, they vanish from sight. He and the goat

are now alone. They travel on, and further on, beyond the reach of any human eye, far off into the distant wilderness ; and then, with neither man nor house in sight, he casts loose the sin-laden creature. And when hours elapse, a speck at length appears on the distant horizon ; it draws nearer and nearer ; it is a solitary man approaching the camp ; and in him, whom now they recognise as the *fit* man who had led away the sin-laden victim, the people see, and we in figure also see, how our Lord, when made an offering for sin, transferred the load of our guilt to himself—bearing it away as to a land that was not known. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

May our faith receive the great truth which was shadowed forth by that impressive ceremony. Christ suffered for his people, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God ! On his sacred head he bore our sins away in the thorny crown, and on his shoulder in the heavy cross ; and, most of all, when, amid that awful darkness, alone, forlorn, cast off by God as well as man, his heart broke in the bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !” Relieved thus from the load of guilt, knowing all his sins were then atoned for, and possessing evidence, in the witness

of God's Spirit with his own, that they are now forgiven, how happy should the believer be! Envy no man's state and coveting no man's goods, with God's peace in our heart and heaven's glory in our eye, this be our language and sweet experience, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The Image of God.

Who is the image of the invisible God.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

I AM an old man, and have never seen God," said a grey-haired Indian to Sir John Franklin, when that distinguished traveller was pursuing one of his earlier expeditions into those arctic regions where he first won fame, and afterwards found a grave. From that fact the old man argued that there is no God ; since, if there were a God, he must have seen and met him somewhere, in the course of his long life and wide wanderings. Stupid savage ! He would not believe in God because he had never seen him ; yet, though he had never seen the wind, when it howled along the waste, or whirled the snow-flakes on the plain, or roared through the pine-forest, or swept his canoe over the foaming billows, or roused the sea to burst its wintry chains, and float away from silent shores their fields and glittering bergs of ice—he believed in it.

We believe in many things we never saw, on

the evidence of other senses than sight—in invisible voices, that roll on the ear those waves of sound, by means of which our spirits, shut up within material forms, telegraph their thoughts and hold intercourse one with another; in invisible odours—the fragrance of rose or lily, and the sweet-scented breath of a thousand other flowers; nay, in the existence of what we neither hear, nor see, nor taste, nor smell, nor touch—though ignorant of what and where they are, in the life that animates and in the immortal spirits that inhabit our mortal bodies. Thus, with our knowledge and education, we are not in danger of falling into the mistake of Franklin's savage, or doing anything so foolish and absurd as to doubt the being of God because his person is invisible. Still, though that circumstance may not lead us to deny his existence, alas! how often does it tempt the best of us to forget it! As to the ungodly, God is not in all their thoughts—"They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear shall he not hear? He that formed the eye shall

he not see?" Let me, therefore, embrace the opportunity that the text presents, of dwelling for a little on that feature of the Divine Being which the apostle speaks of, in setting Christ before us as the visible image of an invisible God.

- I. Let me warn you against allowing God to be out of mind because he is out of sight.

This is not only a fault to which we are prone, but one to which our very constitution exposes us; hence the need of striving, of making an earnest effort to "walk by faith, not by sight." How difficult an acquirement!—we are to so great a degree the creatures of sense. The sight of some companion of our boyhood, from whom many years and wide seas have parted us, recalls old days, and rekindles affections that had been slumbering in their ashes; or we light on a letter written by a kind hand long mouldering in the dust, and that opens afresh wounds which time seemed to have healed—renewing forgotten griefs! I have known a man far advanced in life, standing, like a grey and aged pilgrim, on the borders of another world, so moved as he gazed on the picture of an early love, that fountains long sealed burst out anew; and over the youthful and beautiful image of her

whom the grave had held for long years in its cold embraces, the old man bowed his head, and wept and sobbed like a woman. And what effect mere sight has on other passions may be seen in the rout of yonder battle-field, where the column that has stood the volleying shot, and faced the flashes of death so long as he came invisible in a shower of bullets, wavers, staggers, reels, breaks, scatters like a flock of sheep, before the charge. They cannot stand *seen* death—this line that, with knit brows, and rapid rush, and terrible cheers, and gleaming bayonets, forming a horrid hedge of steel, hurls itself on their ranks.

And is it not just because we are chiefly affected by the visible, that the grave becomes the land of forgetfulness? Out of sight, the dead are jostled out of mind; thrust off as are withered leaves from beech or oaken hedge by the green growth of spring; buried in our hearts as in their own tombs. Thus, though recalling them now and then, widows forget their husbands, wearing their weeds sometimes longer than their griefs; parents forget their children, the living pushing out the dead; and churches forget their ministers; and nations forget the patriots whom they have entombed in marble, and honoured with statues—“Our fathers, where are they? the prophets, do

they live for ever?" The greatest man in church or state is in his fall like a mass loosened from the mountain-crag and bounding into the quiet lake. It produces a great commotion, echoing among the silent hills, and surging its waves up along the troubled shore; but how soon all is quiet again! He goes down, like a stately ship, in full sail and with all her colours flying—for a time society is widely affected; the event produces a great impression; the public mind is agitated to its lowest depths; and, as he sinks into the grave, he draws men's thoughts after him as that ship does all which floats nigh her, down into the whirlpool she makes in her descent. Yet it is with him as with her, once buried beneath the waters. How soon the sea grows still again, and resumes its calmness!—even so the grave has hardly closed over its mighty dead when new, though much inferior, events and persons engross public attention—just as the interest of men becomes more fixed on the little boat that bears a living crew over the placid waters, than on the gallant ship which, with all her brave men and battle guns, lies buried in the depths below.

So it is in religious things, and all those matters which affect our eternal well-being; what is out of sight is apt to go out of mind. Let this teach us to take all the more heed to live by faith

in the invisible; to consider how, with all their glare and show, things seen are paltry, passing, the least of things, and that to the unseen only belong grandeur and endurance. The soul is unseen; jewel of immortality, it lies concealed within a fragile, fleshly casket—hell and heaven are unseen; the first sinks beneath our sight, the second rises above it—the eternal world is unseen; a veil impenetrable hangs before its mysteries, hiding them from the keenest eye—death is unseen; he strikes his blow in the dark—the devil is unseen; stealing on us often unsuspected, and always invisible. And as is our deadliest foe, so is our best and trustiest, our heavenly Friend—Jesus is an invisible Saviour, and Jehovah an invisible God.

“No man hath seen God at any time;” yet why should that be turned into a temptation to sin, which should rather minister to constant watchfulness and holy care? How solemn the thought, that an invisible being is ever at our side; watching us; recording with rapid pen each deed and word, the desires that rise, though it be to burst like an air-bell, every thought that passes, though on an eagle’s wing. We cannot shake off the presence of God; and when doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and the dark night fills our chamber, and we are left alone, amid the stillness,

to our own thoughts, it might keep them pure and holy to fancy that we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness, and to say "Thou, God, seest me." The world called him mad who imagined that he saw God's eye looking on him out of every star of the sky, and flower of the earth, and leaf of the forest, from the ground he trode upon, from the walls of his lonely chamber, and out of the gloomy depths of night. Mad! It was an enviable, blessed, holy fancy. Could we feel ourselves at all times more in God's presence than at any time in that of our fellow-men, how promptly would every bad thought be banished; what unholy deeds would be crushed in the desire, nipped in the bud, strangled in the birth; what crimes would remain uncommitted; how feeble would the strongest temptations prove; what a purity, nobility, loftiness, holiness, heavenliness, would be imparted to our whole bearing and conversation! The Christian would display a dignity in his mien, such as rank never wore, nor courtly training bred; and over the door of our hearts, as over that of heaven, this were written in the blood of Jesus, Here "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth."

II. The visible revelations of the Invisible, recorded in Old Testament history, were manifestations of the Son of God.

Let me select a few cases where God is said to have been seen. To-morrow Esau and Jacob are to meet. A quarrel of long standing between them had all the bitterness of a domestic feud. Jacob had foully deceived and deeply injured his brother. Dreading the vengeance of Esau, whom he had not seen for years, he heard of his approach, with four hundred men at his back, with fear and trembling; greatly alarmed, he cried, "God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, the mother with the children!" Pattern to us when temptation threatens or misfortunes lower, Jacob, having done all that man's wisdom could devise, or his power do in the circumstances, flies for help to God. He will prepare for to-morrow's trial by a night of prayer. Sending off his wives and children across Jabbok's stream, to place the innocent out of danger, or leave them to forget it in sleep's sweet oblivion, he withdraws to a solitary spot, where, with deepest silence around him, and the bright stars above his

head, he is on his knees alone with God. Suddenly, as if he had approached with the stealthy, creeping step of a savage, or had sprung from out the ground, some one grasps him. Folded in his arms, Jacob cannot cast him off—and now comes a struggle for the mastery. Locked together, they wrestle in the dark; they bend; they try, each to throw the other; and, in some mysterious commingling of bodily and spiritual wrestling, the night passes—the conflict lasting till break of day. Let me go, said the unknown, when his eye caught the gleaming dawn, for the day breaketh. Jacob held him faster. He had recognised the other; danger made him bold; faith gave him confidence; and, clinging to God with the grasp of a drowning man, he replied, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. He prevailed, and got the blessing, naming the place Peniel: “for I have *seen God* face to face, and my life is preserved.”

Again, Joshua and the host are lying before Jericho, about to commence the siege. To enjoy an hour of quiet devotion, undisturbed by the din and distractions of the camp, or, perhaps, like a wary general, under cover of the night, to reconnoitre the position of the enemy, and find where he might attack with most success, Joshua goes forth alone. And as, advancing with bold yet cautious steps,

he turns some corner of the road, some angle of the wall, he starts—finding himself face to face with an armed man. His bravery is not ruffled. He thinks not of retreat. Drawing, advancing, and perhaps pointing his sword to the breast of the unknown, he challenges with the question, Art thou for us or for our adversaries? He was promptly answered; nor could the sword of the other, gleaming in the moonbeam, to descend 'on his helmet and fell him to the ground, have brought Joshua more suddenly to his knees than that answer. “Nay,” was the reply; “but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” Captain of the host of the Lord! No man, nor angel this! God himself is commander of the forces. The order, first issued to Moses from the flames of the burning bush, and now repeated to his successor, “Put thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground,” reveals God's own presence. Joshua worships; and rises with hope, and holy confidence! And yet not higher than believers may venture to cherish in their daily fight with the devil, the world, and the flesh. The Captain of your salvation mingles in the conflict; he is on your side also: and, as Joshua might have said on his return to the host, you can say, Our God shall fight for us.

Again, as God assumed a visible form to foretell the fall of Jericho, so he did to foretell the rise of Samson—suiting his appearances, as he still does his grace, to the varied circumstances of his people. He who met Joshua as a mailed warrior, presents himself to Manoah's wife under a peaceful aspect; yet with such blending of the human and divine as appeared in our Lord—his form belonged to earth, but his face shone with a heavenly glory. "A man of God came unto me," she said to her husband, "and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible." His tidings were strange enough to rouse a woman's curiosity, yet awe struck her dumb, nor left her a word to say; "I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." Some days thereafter she is alone in the field; and while she ruminates, perhaps, on an event that had deeply impressed her mind, suddenly the same form appears. She hastens home; tells her husband; returns with him; and Manoah, less timid than his wife, solves the mystery. What is thy name? he bluntly asks. Why askest thou thus after my name, was the significant reply, seeing it is secret? He found by this reply, and to his great surprise and awe, that he stood in the presence of God; nor could a doubt of that remain, when this Being of incommunicable name, called fire from

the rock to consume the sacrifice, and leaping on the altar, ascended to heaven in its flames. The first to recover speech, Manoaah turns to his wife, and, pale with terror, cries—"We shall surely die, because we have *seen God*."

There are many other cases of the same character. Let me select one other, where, as I have seen a dull, leaden cloud changed by a flood of sunbeams into living gold, the divine glory bursting forth sheds such effulgence on the scene, that it wears an aspect more of heaven than of earth. Within the holy temple Isaiah beholds one sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. His train, not white-robed priests but shining seraphim, fills the house; incense that never distilled from earthly trees, diffuses celestial odours; voices like the choirs of heaven, and such as shepherds heard in the skies of Bethlehem, fill the courts with praise, as, in anticipation of gospel days, they sing, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. Nature acknowledges the presence of her God—the earth trembles, the door-posts shake, the fire burns dim on the altar through a cloud of smoke; and the prophet, overpowered by the awful glory, cries as he falls prostrate to the ground, "Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips: and I dwell in the

midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have *seen the king, the Lord of Hosts.*" By such manifestations of himself did a gracious God, from time to time, comfort and encourage his people in the days of old.

On turning to another page of the Sacred Writings, we find it averred that "no man hath seen God at any time ;" and how are we to reconcile the two—that positive statement and these plain facts? There is no way of doing so, but by regarding these appearances as manifestations of him "who is the image of the invisible God," and believing that it was Christ who appeared to Abraham, wrestled with Jacob, and leading Israel out of Egypt by the hands of Moses and of Aaron, conducted them to the promised land. This is a conclusion which Scripture fully warrants. Paul, for instance, distinctly charges the Israelites with having tempted Christ in the desert—Neither, says he, let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

This idea harmonises with other passages in the history of redemption. The fruit of our Lord's incarnation was certainly anticipated ; the benefits of his death enjoyed before he died ; the legacies of the will paid before the demise of the testator ; seeing that the saints, who lived in days preceding

his advent, were received into glory, if I may so speak, on his bond—his promise to pay. And if the blessings of his incarnation were thus anticipated, why not the fact itself? Viewed in the light of such a belief, many Old Testament stories acquire a deeper and more enduring interest than before. In the guide of Abraham's pilgrimage, we see the guide of our own. Jacob's success in wrestling imparts energy to our prayers. To think that the same arm which opened the gates of the sea, and stopped the wheels of the sun, hung for us in feeble infancy around a mother's neck; that the same voice which rolled in Sinai's thunders, for us wailed on Mary's bosom, and on the bloody cross cried, I thirst; that he who delivered the law amid the greatest majesty of heaven, died for us to fulfil it amid the deepest ignominy; that he before whom Moses did exceedingly fear and quake, and Joshua fell, and Isaiah fainted, was that same Jesus, whose gentleness won the confidence of childhood, and whose meek eye beamed forgiveness on that frail fallen woman who stooped to wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head—these things exalt Jesus in our esteem, and endear him more and more to our hearts. What a combination of grandest majesty and gentlest mercy shines in this visible "Image

of the invisible God ;" how worthy he appears of being accepted, and revered, and loved !

In turning your attention now to the person and work of him who is "the image of the invisible God," let me introduce the subject by remarking,

III. That the greatness of the worker corresponds to the greatness of the work.

It is not always so in the providence of God. He saves by many or by few ; accomplishing the mightiest ends sometimes by the feeblest instruments.

Let me give an example. Many of the lovely islands of the Pacific are formed of coral. Others of them are protected from the violence of the waves by a rampart formed of the same material, which, rising from the depths of ocean, indicates its presence by a long white line of breakers. The rollers that come in from sea, and threaten to sweep the island from its foundations, spend their strength on this protection-wall — dashing their waters against it into snowy foam ; and thus, while all without is a tumbling ocean, the narrow strip of water that lies between this bulwark and the shore, as within a charmed circle, calmly reflects, like a liquid mirror, the canoes that sleep

on its surface, and the stately palms that fringe its beach. These breakwaters, which greatly surpass in point of size and strength any our art and science have erected, are the work of what? He who employed the hornet to drive the Amorite out of Canaan, constructs them by means as insignificant. The masons here are insects so small, that the naked eye can hardly detect them, and so feeble that an infant's finger could crush them—they are coral worms. And they who have seen these isles lying within their silver border, like emerald gems on the ocean's bosom, say that the contrast between the greatness of the work and the littleness of the worker is most surprising.

Turning from the Book of Nature, let us take another illustration, drawn from the Bible. Look on this picture of desolation in the land of Israel; "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. The appearance of them is as the appearance of

horses ; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained ; all faces shall gather blackness. The earth shall quake before them ; the heavens shall tremble ; the sun and the moon shall be dark ; and the stars shall withdraw their shining : and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army : for his camp is very great."

In answer to the cry of blood, and to crush a horrible rebellion, we covered the sea with sails, and, summoning our soldiers from distant colonies, poured them from crowded ships, by gigantic efforts, on the distant shores of India ; but whence did God bring the army, which the prophet describes in such vivid, glowing colours ? Came its hosts from heaven, in troops of embattled angels rushing forth to avenge his cause ? Or did he summon the Assyrian, the Egyptian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, to pour their devastating armies on a doomed and guilty land ? No. The earth quaked, but not beneath the tread of armies ; the sun, moon, and stars, were darkened, but not by a cloud of angel wings. God summoned only the locust from its native marshes, and bade the brood of

worms devour the land. It was summer yesterday—the fields waved with corn ; orchards were white with almond blossoms ; clustering vines embraced the rocks ; and forests were in a mantle of living green. The locust comes, and to-day it is winter—the flowers are gone ; fields are bare ; leafless trees, as if imploring pity, lift naked arms to heaven ; and, bearing on it the wails of hunger, the wind, that yesterday breathed perfumes, and danced in joy over the corn, and played and sung among the leaves, now sweeps in howling blasts over a scene of utter devastation. The locust has executed its commission ; and in that work of God's which it has done, we see another and no less remarkable contrast between the greatness of the action and the littleness of the agent.

God has often, indeed, in his providence and the government of his people, produced great effects by what seemed most inadequate means ; doing it of set purpose, to show that, whatever be the instrument, the work, whether of goodness or of judgment, is his own. He is a jealous God, and will not give his glory unto another. In Moses, for example, we see one of the enslaved race ; not crouching before Pharaoh with awe in his look, and a humble petition in his hand, but standing erect before their tyrant, and demanding that his

brethren should go free. In David we see a beardless lad, attired in a shepherd's peaceful garb, carrying provisions to his brothers in the camp, and gazing around him with rustic curiosity on all the circumstance, and pomp, and pride of war. But next day what a change! Amid beating hearts, breathless suspense, and eyes dim with anxiety, that gentle boy, his mother's love, and his old father's care, is doing brave battle with a giant, and, with two great armies for spectators, plucking the laurels from Goliah's brow.

Though not, perhaps, in outward aspect, how marked the contrast between these scenes and that of salvation!—that great work, which, amid God's other works throughout all past ages, is without a parallel. Do not despise it; or reject it; no, nor neglect it; for, as the apostle asks, How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Redemption is God's greatest, his "strange" work; the cross which mercy raised on Calvary costing more love, and labour, and wisdom, and skill divine, than all yon starry universe. How glorious Nature's temple with the broad earth for its floor, its lofty roof the sapphire firmament, its lamps the sun and stars, its incense ten thousand odours, its music the song of groves and the murmur of the streams and the voices of winged winds and

the pealing thunder and the everlasting roar of ocean! Yet the spiritual temple is nobler still—with saints for its living stones, and God and the Lamb for its uncreated lights, it stands aloft on the Rock of Ages, the admiration of angels and the glory of the universe. Earth wears no blossoms on her bosom so white, and pure, and fragrant, as the flowers of the garland on a Saviour's brow!—Magdalene, Manasseh, Saul, and ten times ten thousand more in heaven, are a wonder to angels, and an astonishment to themselves. Yet, great as is the work of redemption, how much greater is the worker! “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?” He comes; hell flies his presence—he appears; all the angels of God worship him—he speaks; the tempestuous sea is calm—he commands; the grave gives up its dead—he stands on this sin-smitten world, “in praises, doing wonders;” the visible image of an invisible God. Angels announce his advent and attend his departure, hovering alike over the manger of Bethlehem and the crest of Olivet; and when he has left the grave to ascend the throne, hark to the cry at the gate of heaven, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of Glory shall come in." Within they ask, "Who is this King of Glory?" The gate rolls open, and, greeted with shout and song, the procession enters, as his escort answer, "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory." May our hearts receive him with equal honours and gladness ! Holy Spirit, throw open their gates ! Jesus, ascend their throne ! that, holding thee whom heaven holds, we may enjoy a heaven within us ; and, washed in thy blood and renewed by thy Spirit, may present in ourselves the reflection and visible image of the invisible God !

The Image of God.

(Continued.)

Who is the image of the invisible God.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

DESCRIBING a tribe of African pagans, Dr. Livingstone says, "Like most others, they listen with respect and attention; but when we kneel down and worship an unseen Being, the act and position appear to them so ridiculous, that they cannot refrain from bursting into uncontrollable laughter." Accustomed from earliest childhood to worship the unseen, we wonder at these merry savages; and yet, by nature we also are creatures of sight and sense. Hence our desire to see any remarkable person; hence the pleasure we take in the portrait that embellishes the biography of a great or good man, or in the statue which preserves his features and adorns his tomb; and hence also, though some may deem the publican's a childish curiosity, our sympathy with Zaccheus, when, having heard that Jesus was passing, he left the receipt of custom to join the

throng, and, lost there, shot ahead of the multitude to climb a friendly sycamore, that he might catch a glance at the wonder-working man. We esteem it not the least of the blessings to be enjoyed in heaven, that we shall see Jesus there; see him as he is; gaze with fond adoring love on the very face and form which our faith has so often tried to fancy, and painters of the greatest genius have utterly failed to express.

A sense of guilt makes man afraid of God. Conscience makes cowards of us all; so that, as Adam fled to the bushes of the garden from the presence, many fly from the thought of God—of him in whom, but for sin, they would have lovingly confided, and whose works, but for the fears of guilt, would kindle a devout curiosity to see the hand that formed them. Who, rapt in admiration, has gazed on the spangled firmament, or the blue ocean, or, from the peak of some lofty mountain, looked over a tumbling sea of hills, or down on the glorious landscape, where, in the mingled beauty of dark greenwood, and golden fields, and silver streams, and castle-crowned summits, and scattered villages, and busy towns, it stretched away to the distant shore, and not felt some soul-longing for a nearer view of God? There are times when we have almost wished that he were

not invisible ; and so entered in some measure into the feelings of Moses on Mount Sinai. The everlasting thunderings, the vivid lightnings, the dark cloud and awfully sublime voices of the mount, were not God. The heart of Moses craved for some view of Jehovah himself ; and so, highest example of perfect love casting out fear, with the lightnings playing around his head and the earth shaking beneath his feet, bold man ! he bent, and knelt, and said, Shew me thy glory.

Being, as we have already shewn, so much creatures of sight and sense, this incident leads me to remark—

I. That God, as revealed visibly in Jesus Christ, satisfies one of our strongest wants.

Our Lord's divinity, which to some is like his death to the Jew—"a stumbling-block," like his resurrection to the Greek—foolishness, does not stagger my faith in the Bible. On the contrary, the doctrine of his divine nature strengthens my belief in its divine authority ; the sacred volume appearing on that account all the more plainly to be both the power of God, and the wisdom of God. That doctrine goes to establish, not shake, the claims of the Bible to be devoutly received as a revelation from heaven.

“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth ; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ;”—so runs the second commandment ; and the universal practice of mankind shews that there is not one of the ten commandments which runs more counter to our nature. Surprising as that remark may seem, in proof of it—

1. Look at the heathen world.

For long ages the whole earth was given up to idolatry, with the exception of a single nation. The Hebrews stood alone ; worshipping in a temple without an idol, and rejecting the use of images in the services of religion. Go back to the remotest time ; and starting from the age either of those old Assyrians, whose gods we have been digging from the ruins of Nineveh, or of those older Egyptians whose mummy forms, with their dog and hawk-headed divinities, lie entombed on the banks of the Nile, come down to the last-discovered tribe of savages, we find that all nations, with scarcely an exception, have been idolaters. All have clung to the visible, and employed sensible representations of the divinity ; theirs a sensuous worship, whether it was the adoration of one or of ten thousand

gods. Nor is this wonderful. To fix the mind and affections on an invisible Being seemed like attempting to anchor a vessel on what offers nothing to hold by—a flowing tide or rolling billows. And, as a climbing plant, for lack of a better stay, will throw its arms around a ruined wall or rotting tree, so men, rather than want something palpable to which their thoughts might cling, have worshipped the Divine Being through images—sometimes of the basest character and most hideous forms. We gaze with astonishment on the gods of many heathen races ; asking, Is it possible that rational beings have bent the knee to this painted stick which, with a bunch of feathers stuck on its head and two bits of pearl-shell for eyes, presents only the rudest resemblance to the form of humanity ? Talk of “the dignity of our nature !” How does that ugly idol, with man supplicating its help and trembling before its wrath, refute the notion, and proclaim the fall ! Contrast Adam, erect in his innocence, and lifting up an open countenance to the heavens, with that dark, crouching, miserable savage, who kneels to this stick. What a fall is there !—how is the gold become dim ? how is the most fine gold changed ? Then,

2. Look at the evidence of this proneness to sensuous worship in the history of the Jews.

Among them, the propensity to idolatry was constantly manifesting itself; just as I have seen broom, and furze, and heath, and other plants natural to the soil, spring up in cultivated pastures—ready to resume possession, should the husbandman relax his efforts to keep them down, and root them out. There could be no greater folly than for the Israelites to venerate the gods of Egypt. If the gods whose aid their masters invoked had been else than “vanity,” the Hebrews had remained slaves; still so strong was their proneness to idolatry, that they worshipped a calf at the foot of Sinai. Again, the grass was hardly green on David’s grave, when his son, at once the wisest and most foolish of men, allowed himself to be seduced by heathen women to lend his countenance to idolatry—the abomination of Moab stood in front of the temple, and Ashtaroth, enthroned on Olivet, looked down with contempt on the courts of Zion. Again, when the kingdom was broken up through the insane folly of Rehoboam, the ten tribes, like a bark parted from her anchors and borne by a strong tide on a fatal reef, drifted toward idolatry. A few years sufficed to engulf the whole nation in the grossest paganism, and ere one half century had passed, Elijah stands alone; faithful among the faithless; none else by any

public act protesting against the universal idolatry, he cries, "I, even I only, am left." Thus rapidly, when abandoned by God to their passions, do both men and nations sink; and still the history of many proves that nothing is so easy as the descent into hell. Then,

3. We find evidence of this propensity to idolatry even in the Christian church. We have not to rake up the ashes of Jewish history, nor disturb the graves of ancient Nimrods and Pharaohs, nor import their rude idols from Polynesian shores, to prove the deep longing that there is in man for a God whom his senses may embrace. Christianity has suffered deeply from this cause. Look at the church of Rome; her temples are crowded with images. Were an old Roman to rise from his grave on the banks of the Tiber, and look on the sensuous worship of modern Rome—the honours paid to a doll decked out to represent Christ's mother—multitudes prostrate at the feet of stone apostles—the incense and prayers offered to a lifeless effigy, here represented as hanging on a cross, or there seated on the globe with a sceptre in his hand and a serpent beneath his feet, what could the pagan suppose but that the "eternal city" had changed her idols, but not ceased from her idolatry—by some strange turn of fate, giving to

one Jesus the throne of Jupiter, and assigning the crown which Juno wore in his days to another queen of heaven? In that bestial form at the foot of Sinai, with the shameless, naked, frantic crowd singing and dancing and shouting around it, the scene which filled Moses with indignation strikes us with astonishment; and we are ready to ask how, with God thundering above their heads, they could fall into such gross idolatry? Yet we have stood astonished to see a rational creature bending to a tinselled image, amid circumstances which made the act appear hardly less surprising and degrading. By its worship of the creature, we have seen Popery insulting the glory of God, amid scenes whose magnificence raised the soul to him, as on eagles' wings. Blind leader of the blind, there she was turning away the faith, and love, and worship of his creatures from him whose voice was heard in the roar of Alpine cataracts, and whose mighty hand was seen in mountains which stood piled to heaven, crowned with its eternal snows; and of whose great white throne of judgment one fancied he saw a solemn image in that pure, majestic, snowy dome, which glistened in sunbeams high above the valleys, already wrapped in evening gloom.

Now, in what way shall we account for this

tendency to idolatry? It is not enough to call it folly. What has led to such folly?—all men to it, philosophers with fools, the wisest with the weakest of the heathen? It admits of but one explanation; this, namely, the feelings from which idolatry springs are rooted in our nature.

God is invisible, infinite, incomprehensible; so you teach me that neither in wood, nor stone, nor colours, may I impart to him form or figure; features to express his emotions, or hands to do his work; eyes although they beam, or a heart although it beats with love; and you warn me, moreover, that, even in imagination, to clothe the Divine Being in a form the most venerable and august is to fall into a species of idolatry. But it seems as difficult for me to embrace such a Being with my affections, as to grasp a sound, or to detain a shadow—the heart craves something more congenial to our nature, and seeks in God a palpable object for its affections to cling to. Such is our want; and see how it is met by the gospel—provided for by him who “knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.”

Nothing appears to me more remarkable in providence, or more clearly attests the being and attributes of an all-presiding God, than the perfect adaptation of creatures to the circumstances in

which they are placed. See how the summer which brings back the swallows to our door, produces myriads of insects for their food ; how those creatures which are made to burrow in the soil have bodies shaped like a wedge, and fore-feet formed to do the work of a spade ; how the animals that inhabit arctic climes are wrapped in furs, which man, for the sake of their warmth, is glad to borrow, and to which God, to protect them from the eyes and attacks of their enemies, has given the colour of the snow ; how, furnished with hollow bones and downy feathers, birds are adapted to float in the air ; and how other creatures, slow of motion, and unarmed for battle, carry a strong castle on their backs—retiring when attacked within their shell, as men into a stronghold. In these things the student of nature recognises, with adoring wonder, the harmony which God has established between his creatures and their circumstances ; nor is the divinity of our faith less conspicuous, in respect of its perfect adaptation to the peculiarities, or, if you will call them so, to the infirmities of our nature. In the Lord Jesus Christ, his incarnate Son, God presents himself to me in a form which meets my wants ; the Infinite is brought within the limits of my narrow understanding ; the Invisible reveals himself to my sight ; I can touch him, hear him, see him,

speak to him ; in the hand held out to save me, I have what my own can grasp ; in the eye, bedewed with tears or beaming with affection, which bends on me, I see divine love in a form which I feel, and can understand. In Jesus, God addresses me in human tones ; stands before me in the fashion of a man ; and, paradox as it appears, when I fall at his feet to say with Thomas, My Lord and my God, I am an image-worshipper, yet no idolater—the Being before whom I bend being no mere man, nor graven image, nor dead thing, but the living, loving, eternal, “express image” of the “invisible God.”

II. Consider in what sense Jesus Christ is “the image of the invisible God.”

The term image is to be taken here in its widest and most comprehensive sense. It means much more than a mere resemblance ; conveys the idea of shadow less than that of substance ; and is to be understood in the sense in which Paul employs it, saying of the Mosaic institutions—“The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the *very image*,” or *substance*, “of the things.” An image may be moulded in clay ; or cut in marble ; or struck in metal ; or so formed on the lake’s liquid mirror,

that, when winds were hushed, and no ripple disturbed the lake, we have lain over our boat to see the starry firmament imaged in its crystal depths ; and wish it were thus in our bosom—a heaven above repeated in a heaven below. Then there are living, as well as dead images. And, as a Christian's life, without his lips telling it, should proclaim him a child of God, so I have known an infant bear such striking resemblance to his father, that what his tongue could not tell, his face did ; and people, struck by the likeness, remarked of the nursling, He is the very image of his father. Such was Adam in his state of innocence. Endowing him with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, God made good his words, "Let us make man in our image."

Now it may be said that, as our Lord, like the first Adam, was pure and holy, "harmless," and "undefiled," he is therefore called the image of God. But that does not exhaust the meaning of this term ; nor is it therefore that Paul speaks of him as "the second Adam," but because, as their representative and federal head, Jesus stood in the same covenant relationship to his people, as our first parent did to his posterity.

Nor have they sounded the depths of this expression, who say that, since our Lord was

endowed with power to do miraculous works, he might therefore be called the image of God. Many others, both before and after him, were in that sense equally images of God. How godlike was Moses, when he raised his arm to heaven, and thunders rent the answering skies ; when, giving origin perhaps to the legend of Neptune and his trident, he waved his rod on the deep, and, billow rolling back from billow, the sea was parted by his power ! What a godlike action Joshua's on that battle-field, where he met and conquered five kings in fight ! God fought for him with hail-stones and he fought for God with swords, and no more than devils of hell could withstand us, were we always to summon heaven to our aid, could Joshua's foes stand before such onslaught—"Kings of armies did flee apace," and that day five crowns were lost. But, ere Joshua has reaped the fruits of this great victory, the sun, emerging from the dark hail-cloud, has sunk low in the sky ; his burning wheels rest on the crest of Gibeon, while the moon, marshalling on the night to protect the flying enemy, is showing her face over the valley of Ajalon. Joshua sees that, as has happened to other conquerors, darkness will rob him of the prize, nor leave anything more substantial in his hand than a wreath of laurel—the mere honours

of the day. Inspired for the occasion, he lifts his bloody sword to the heavens, commanding their luminaries to stop: and when, like high-mettled coursers which, knowing their masters' hand, instantly obey the rein, the sun and moon stand still, hang motionless in the portentous sky, he stands there a grand and visible image of God? Yet, where is Moses, or Joshua, or Elijah, or Paul, or Peter, or any of all the servants by whom Jehovah wrought wonders in the days of old, called an "image of the invisible God?"—or set forth as mysteries?—or represented as "God manifest in the flesh?" Of which of them, as of Jesus, did the Father say, Let all the angels of God worship him? A blind superstition may pay them worship; but yonder, where no error clouds the vision, and Moses bends the knee beside Mary Magdalene, and Joshua bows low as Rahab, and Paul sings of the mercy that saved in himself the chief of sinners, they worship Jesus, as in his double nature both God and man; a visible manifestation of the Invisible; "the only begotten of the Father;" distinguished from all other likenesses, whether impressed on holy angels or sainted men, as "*the express image of his person.*" Herein appears the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God; for you he gave that image to be

broken—shattered by the hand of death ; Jesus, blessed be his name, died, the just for the unjust, that we might be saved.

III. Let me direct your attention to some illustrations of this truth.

“Shew us the Father,” said Philip to our Lord. Had he asked him to cleave a mountain, divide the sea, stop the sun, or lay his hand on the hands of time, he had asked nothing impossible, or more difficult for Jesus than saying to a cripple, Walk, or to the dead, Come forth ! Yet since “no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him,” impossible and strangely bold as was his request, it was followed by a happy issue ; in that it called forth from our Lord a reply which bore the clearest testimony both to his own divinity and to his Father’s loving, pitiful, tender nature. “He that hath seen me, Philip,”—seen me weeping with the living and for the dead, receiving little children into my arms to bless them, inviting the weary to rest, pitying all human suffering, patient under the greatest wrongs, encouraging the penitent, and ready to forgive the vilest sinners—“hath seen the Father ;” in me, my character and works, you have a visible “image of the invisible God.”

In selecting some of the divine attributes to illustrate this, I remark—

1. In our Lord Jesus Christ we see the power of God.

An Arab of the desert, one more accustomed to fight than reason, and plunder a caravan than argue a cause, was asked by a traveller how he knew that there was a God. He fixed his dark eyes with staring savage wonder on the man who seemed to doubt the being of God; and then, as he was wont, on encountering a foe, to answer spear with spear, he met that question with another, How do I know whether it was a man or a camel that passed my tent last night? Well spoken, child of the desert! for not more plainly do the footprints on the sand reveal to thy eye whether it was man or camel that passed thy tent in the darkness of the night, than God's works reveal his being and power. They testify of him; he has left his footprint impressed upon them all.

Now, whose footprint is that on the ground before the tomb of Lazarus?—was it God or man who passed that way, leaving strange proof of his presence in that empty grave? The days of Eden are come round again; for, unless it be easier to give life to the dust of the grave than the dust of the ground, the witnesses of that stupendous

miracle have seen the arm of God ; and, from the lips that cried, Lazarus, come forth, have they heard the voice which said of old, Let us make man in our image. Nay, a day older than Eden's has returned. To make something out of nothing is a work more visibly divine than to make one thing out of another—a living man out of lifeless dust ; and ere our Lord left the world, he left behind him, in an act, not of forming but of creating power, the most visible footprint and impress of the Creator. The scene of it may be less picturesque and less striking to common eyes, than when Jesus rose in the boat to rebuke the storm ; or than when, crossing Galilee's lake, the waters sustained him, and he walked, like a spirit, on the heaving billows ; or than when he stayed a funeral procession at the gate of Nain, and, going up to the bier, laid his hand on the corpse of the widow's son, and, changing death to life, restored him to her fond embraces ; yet our Lord never appeared more the express image of his Father, than on yonder green, grassy, mountain side. Amid the calmness of the scene, the meanness of the company, if you will have it so, the poverty of the fare—accessories that are as foils to the sparkling gem—Jesus stands forth in the glory of a Creator. At his will, the bread multiplies ; it grows in the

hands of disciples ; five thousand men are filled with what had not otherwise satisfied five ; and, thing before unheard of, the fragments of narrow circumstances and a scanty table exceed the original provision—the materials of the feast filled one basket, but its fragments twelve. The day of creation was restored in that banquet ; and in the author of this, the greatest of all his miracles, who does not see “the express image” of him who made things that are out of things that were not, and said of matter’s first-born and purest element, “Let there be light : and there was light !”

2. In Christ we see the image of a holy God. Years ago a horrible crime was committed in a neighbouring country. It was determined that the guilty man, whoever he might be, on being discovered and convicted, should die. He had fled ; but the eye of justice tracked him out. Dragged from his hiding-place, he is arraigned at the bar ; and fancy the feelings of his judge, when, in the pale, trembling, miserable, guilty wretch, he recognised his son—his only son ! What a struggle now began ! The father’s bosom is torn between the conflicting claims of nature and duty ; and in pity for him, as he sits there transfixed with horror, overwhelmed with grief, while his child, with clasped hands and eyes that swim in tears, implores his mercy, the

guilt of the criminal is forgotten. But duty bears down nature. He pronounces sentence of death ; and in passing it on his son, passes it on himself. Nature would have her own. He rises ; leaves the bench ; hastens home ; lies down on his bed ; and, never rising from it, dies of a broken heart.

God cannot die ; yet when, rather than his holy law should be broken with impunity, he gave up his beloved son to die, a substitute for us, O how did the blood which dyed that cross dye his law in colours of the brightest holiness !—was there ever such a sermon preached on these words, “It is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?” Nor, so much as in that dying Saviour hanging under the frowns of heaven, as beneath that bloody tree where his mother receives into her arms the body of her son, and women in bitter anguish kiss his wounded feet, is there in hell or heaven a scene so awfully illustrative of the angels’ anthem, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty !

3. In Christ we see the image of a God willing and able to save.

Let me illustrate this by an act of salvation which he performed under circumstances of the greatest difficulty and disadvantage. Jesus is dying on the cross ; its excruciating, agonising

pains, the shouts of the pitiless multitude, their insolent mockery, and the deep darkness of the hour, combine to disturb his mind. If he can save then and there, save with his hand nailed to the tree, what may he not do, now that he is exalted to the right hand of God and has all power given him in earth and heaven? To awaken hope in the very bosom of despair, to cheer God's people, and encourage the greatest sinners to turn with faith to this refuge of the lost, let us draw near to the cross, and see how his power to save, streaming like a sunbeam through a riven cloud, revealed him, even on the bloody tree, as the adorable image of an invisible God. And may the Holy Spirit bless the sight!

It is easy to save one who has fallen into the river-flood, where the waters, not yet hurrying to the cataract, flow placidly on their way. But further down the difficulty becomes great, every foot further down the greater, as we enter the current which, moving with faster speed and growing force, at length shoots forward with arrowy flight, and, reaching the brink, leaps headlong into a boiling gulf. Away among the mountains, I know such a place, where once three shepherds, brothers, were to leap, as they had often done, from rock to rock, clearing the narrow chasm through which the roaring waters

rushed onward to their fall. Bold mountaineers, and looking with careless eye on a sight which had turned others dizzy, one bounded over like a red deer ; another followed—but, alas, his foot slipped on the smoothly treacherous ledge. He staggered, reeled, and, falling back, rolled over with a sullen plunge into the jaws of the abyss. Quick as lightning, one brother sprang forward to a point where the waters issue into a more open space before they throw themselves into the black, rock-girdled, boiling cavern. There, standing on the verge of death, he eyes the body coming ; he bends—his arm is out—thank God, he has him in his powerful grasp ! Bravely and brotherly done ! but done in vain. The third unhappy witness of this terrible scene saw him swept from his slippery footing : and, in their death not divided, as of old they had lain in their childhood, locked in each other's arms, they went over—whelmed in the depths of the swirling pool. But not so perished our elder Brother, and the thief he stretched out his hand to save ; plucking him from the brink of hell, saving him on the edge of the dreadful pit. Poor wretch ! he hangs above the gulf. He is half over ; but just then he turns a dying eye on a dying Saviour, and utters a cry for help. The arm of mercy seizes him ; he is saved ;

and now heaven holds him, crowned in glory !
How is Jesus revealed in that scene as the express
image of him who can save at the very utter-
most ! What encouragement does it offer you,
though the chief of sinners, to cast yourselves at
his feet ! Do it ! The Spirit help you to do it
now ! Another moment, and you may be beyond
the reach of mercy ; one other moment may be a
whole eternity too late.

The First-Born.

The first-born of every creature.—COLOSSIANS i. 15.

THOUSANDS—the watchman on his beat, the sentinel on the ramparts, the seaman on the deck, the jaded votaries of pleasure on their return from ball and revel, walk each night beneath the spangled heavens, nor once raise their eyes, or, if they do, raise their thoughts, to the magnificence of the scene. And thousands, each day engrossed with the pursuits of pleasure or business, tread the spangled sward and turn an eye of no more intelligence than an ox on the beautiful flowers, which the little children love to gather, and, singing to their work, weave into garlands for their sunny brows. Not that these persons are constitutionally dead to beauty, or devoid of intelligence, nor that they look on the face of nature with an idiot's stare ; but familiarity, which breeds contempt in some instances, has bred indifference in this. Behold, perhaps, one reason why, though

our Lord presented a combination of divine and human excellences, many were insensible to it; and why, sad to say, he found so much occasion to apply to himself the old proverb, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house!

A less pardonable reason, however, may be found for this in his case, as in others, in that envy to which human nature is so prone. A bad, base, and in every way unprofitable passion, which, more than any other, carries its own punishment, envy is its own avenger; yet, so prone are many to indulge this feeling, that a man may be assured that he has begun to rise in the world so soon as he hears the buzz of detractors, and feels their poisoned stings. This, indeed, is not a bad test of merit. It is the finest and ripest fruit which bears the marks of wasp, or hornet, or other winged or wingless insects. The goose, the seagull, and such common creatures, are left to pursue their way through the air without interruption or attack; but let some noble bird appear, who has a wing to soar aloft and cleave the clouds, and he is harassed and hunted by a noisy crowd, that assail him with their voices, but, mingling cunning with insolence, keep beyond the swoop of his pinions, or the stroke of his talons. Now, see how

Moses, the meekest, noblest, most generous of men, was envied by mean spirits among the children of Israel! "Ye take too much upon you," they said to him and Aaron, "seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore, then, lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Ay, and even his own brother and sister envied him his greatness; and instead of supporting the brother to whom they owed their position, ungratefully attempted to undermine his influence. They pretended that he had done wrong in marrying an Ethiopian woman; it was very wrong in him to make this marriage, to enter into such an unsuitable alliance—so they said to the multitude. Mere dust and smoke *that*, to cover their real motives and accomplish base ends. The envy, from whose evil eye no excellence has a charm to protect, and which, rending asunder the most sacred ties, refuses to spare a brother, was at the root of their discontent. Such was the language which Aaron and Miriam, masking their selfish passions under a fair pretence of patriotism and piety, held to the people; but listen to them in their tent, "Hath the Lord," they said to each other, "indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?"

Looking at such cases, what else was to be ex-

pected from the men of Nazareth, a place of proverbially bad repute, than that they should grudge Jesus his honours, and hate him for his success? He had emerged from deep obscurity, and won a fame that filled every mouth with his works, and circled round all the land. He had become famous; and they had not. It did not matter that that was not his fault. As he grew greater they grew less, and they could not brook that; while such as were stars among them, or wished to be thought so, were mortified to find their light quenched in the blaze of this rising sun. Therefore they hated Christ, giving ground for his complaint, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

On one occasion this feeling, which had been long grumbling like a pent-up volcano, burst forth most insolently. Our Lord was teaching in the synagogue of Nazareth—teaching with that strange, wonderful, divine wisdom, which in the very dawn of childhood astonished the grey divines and subtle lawyers of the temple; not only making unprejudiced hearers hang on his lips, but compelling even his enemies to confess, Never man spake like this man. On the occasion I refer to, envy gnawed, like a canker-worm, at the heart of his townsmen

—what business had he to reach an eminence they might aspire to, but could never attain? Hopeless of that, although they could not rise to his height, they might perchance pull him down to their level. They will try. So at the close of his discourse, when they might have been expected to praise God for the wisdom that had dropped from his lips, and congratulate Mary on her son and their native town also on one whose name would render it famous to latest ages, they cast about for something which, by detracting from his glory, might gratify their spleen. They had nothing to say against either the matter or the manner of the discourse. Both were perfect; nor had they a whisper to breathe against the life and character of the speaker. A circumstance worthy of note! For it is one of the completest testimonies to our Lord's lofty and holy life, that the thirty years which he spent in a small town—where leisure always abounds, and scandal is often rife, and every man's habits are discussed in private circles, and dissected by cutting tongues—did not furnish his enemies with the shred or shadow of an excuse for whispering an ill word against him. His life was a polished mirror, which the foulest breath cannot stain, nor dim beyond a passing-moment. Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, envy

found no way to vent its malice and spit its venom at him, but by a taunt drawn from his humble origin. As if it were not an honour to rise above the circumstances of our birth, and as if a man's ascent by one step above his original condition, fairly, honestly, and honourably won, were not more a matter of just pride than a descent traced from the proudest ancestry, they said, "Is not this the *carpenter*, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?—whence, then, hath this man all these things?"

There is a great blank in our Lord's history, reaching from his early youth to mature manhood. Eighteen years of his life stand unaccounted for; and that blank, dark as a starless region of the sky, tradition, usually so fertile in invention, has not attempted to fill up. How often have we wondered and tried to fancy what Jesus did, and how he passed the time between his boyhood, when he vanishes from our sight, and his thirtieth year, when he again enters the stage to begin his public ministry? Thanks to his townsmen's envious sneer, or, rather, to him who permitted the insult and made the wrath of man to praise him, their insolent taunt throws a ray of light into the deep obscurity. Their question, Is not this the carpenter? not, as at another

time, the carpenter's son, but the *carpenter* himself, suggests a humble home, known in Nazareth as the carpenter's, under whose roof he resided with his mother—in all probability then a widow, and, like many a widow since, cheered by the love and supported by the labours of a dutiful son. I have no doubt that angels, turning from lordly mansions and the proud palaces of kings, often hovered over that peaceful dwelling, as these ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, do still over the humble homes of piety. But, so far as this world and its inhabitants were concerned, Jesus passed his days in contented obscurity ; unnoticed and unknown, save to the neighbours, whose esteem he won by the purity of his life, his gentle temper, and kindly manners. He grew in favour with God and man ; all Nazareth regarded him as a paragon of human virtues ; and mothers pointed to Mary's son, as the pattern their own lads should copy.

How wonderful to transport ourselves back, in fancy, some eighteen hundred years, to that small town ; and on asking, with the Greeks, to “see Jesus,” to be conducted to a humble dwelling, where chips of wood, and squared logs, and trunks of trees—the oak, and olive, and cedar, and sycamore—point out “the carpenter's !” By the door,

and under a vine, which, hung with purple clusters, and trained beneath the eaves over some trellis-work, forms a grateful shade from the noon-day sun, a widow sits ; her fingers employed in weaving, but an expression in her face which reveals a mind engaged on loftier objects—thoughts deeper, holier, stranger than a buried husband, and a widow's grief. She rises and lifts the latch ; stooping, we enter that lowly door, and there we see the carpenter bending to his work ; and in him, the Son of the Most High God ! Time was, when he set his compass on the deep, when he stood and measured the earth ; and now, with line, and compass, and plane, and hatchet, the sweat standing on his brow, he who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, bends at a carpenter's bench, in the guise of a common artizan. How low he stooped to save us ! O the *depth* of the love of God !

The world was once astonished to see a king stoop to such a task. The founder of the Russian empire left his palace, the pleasures and all the pomp of royalty, to acquire the art of ship-building in the dockyard of a Dutch seaport. Peter learned it, that he might teach it to his subjects ; he became a servant, that he might be the better master, and lay in Russia the foundations of a

great naval power. Nor has his country been ungrateful ; her capital bears his name, and besides, adorning it with a monument to his memory, massive as his mind, she has embalmed it in her heart. Yet, little as many think of Jesus, and lightly as they esteem him, a greater sight is here. There, in a king who becomes a subject that his subjects might find him a better king, there was something for men to admire ; but here, there is much for angels to wonder at, and saints to praise throughout eternity. The Son of God stoops to toil. Amazing scene ! Henceforth, let labour feel itself ennobled ; let no man, whatever be his rank, blush for the meanness of his origin ; let the sons of toil lift their heads before the pride of birth or wealth, and feel themselves stand taller on the earth ; let the idle learn to do some good in this world, and turn their brains and hands to some useful purpose. Above all, let sinners behold there a marvellous and most affecting exhibition of the love of God—the carpenter of Nazareth is “the first-born of every creature ;” by whom “were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things

consist." Let us now consider the meaning of this expression, "the first-born of every creature," and let me shew—

I. What the expression does not, and can not, mean.

The first-born of every creature—a strange expression! Seeming to place our Lord among creatures, it sounds so strange that we are ready, in some perplexity, to ask what the apostle can mean by applying such a term to the eternal Son of God? He honours him with the foremost place, yet still seems to place him in the rank of creatures.

There are those who maintain that Christ was a *mere man*. Now this expression, beyond all doubt, cuts the ground from below their feet; and since these words, "the first-born of every creature," assign to our Lord, at least, the highest place among the highest angels, they do not leave the Socinian a foot to stand on. But do they not seem to countenance the Arian heresy—the doctrine of those who hold that, although the highest and noblest of all created things, our Lord is still a creature? Is it so? Have we mistaken his true character? and shall we find, on reaching heaven, that as love is prone to do, we have exaggerated his

excellences, and that, while another occupies its throne, Jesus is but the first among her peers, the highest and oldest of her ancient nobility? As the first of creatures in point of rank and age, as one who dwelt with God when there was none other than himself, as one whose life dates back beyond the period when seas first rolled, and stars shone, and angels sang, Jesus were an object—next to God he were the object, of our deepest interest; still if he is only a creature, however great his power, exalted his rank, pure his nature, lofty his intellect, and incalculable the years of his age, I cannot trust him with my soul; he cannot save me; and I cannot, I dare not, worship him—“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”

The Apostle John saw a strange sight in heaven; yet if, as “the first-born of every creature,” our Lord be but a creature, nor hold divinity within a human shrine, I undertake to show you one more strange. “There appeared,” says the apostle, “a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” That in heaven! Yet, if Jesus, though created prior to all others and in rank next

therefore to God, is, after all, but a creature, this mystic woman, so superbly clad and crowned, so strangely pregnant and pained in heaven, would offer no wonder so inexplicable as these angels do, who worship at the Saviour's feet; nor in that upper world, where there are neither births nor burials, would her birth-pang cries sound so strange in our ears, as that command from the excellent majesty, "Let all the angels of God worship him!" If he is not God, how can the law, which forbids me to worship any but God, allow to angels what it denies to man? Can that be right in them which is wrong in us? Can that be true worship in heaven which were idolatry on earth? If it be sin to render divine worship to a creature here, it appears to me that it would be but further wrong, and a deeper wrong, an aggravation of the sin, to worship one in heaven; and, therefore, startled by an expression which seems to rank our Lord with creatures, we might, at the first blush of the thing, address Paul in the words of the men of Athens.

Having astonished her philosophers; in Jesus and resurrection from the grave, preached a doctrine which her boldest spirits had never ventured to imagine; and, by news such as these news-seekers had never dreamed of, thrown the city into commotion, they hurried him away to the Areopagus,

saying, "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean." We might be disposed to say the same to Paul; in calling Christ "the first-born of creatures," he brings strange tidings to our ears. What does he mean? Well, what he does not mean is very plain from the way in which he conjoins this verse with the text. In the same breath, and as part of the same sentence, the apostle says that "he created all things." Created all things! But he could not create himself, and he was therefore himself uncreated; and Paul therefore never could mean to say that our Lord, however high might be the rank assigned him, was to be placed in the rank of creatures. No man inspired of God, no logician like the apostle, no person even of common sense, could write, nor would men of ordinary reason and intelligence believe, a thing so absurd and self-contradictory as that anything could create itself; or, that a thing created could possess creating power. To create, to call something out of nothing, be it a spark or a blazing sun, a dew-drop cradled in a lily's bosom or the vast ocean in the hollow of God's hand, mole-hill or mountain, the motes of a sunbeam or the planets of a solar system, a seraph or a feeble glow-worm, one of the ephemeræ that takes wing in the morning and is

dead at night, or one of the angels that sang when our Lord was born—whatever the thing created may be, to create is God's work, and his only; and, therefore, since Paul says that Jesus Christ did create all things, he cannot mean to depose our Lord from the throne of divinity, and lower God's only begotten son to the level of created beings.

II. Consider what this phrase, "the first-born of every creature," does mean.

Eli trembled for the ark of God; and dear as that ark which rash hands had borne into the battle-field, to the devout, blind, old priest, is our Lord's divinity to us. The loss of that broke his neck; the loss of this would break our hearts. But Paul's expression gives no cause for anxiety about Christ's honours. It does not detract from, but rather illustrates, his divinity; and is a figure of speech, under which that doctrine lies as firm, solid, immovable, as the living rock beneath the flush of flowers and the green sward that cover it. Paul has clothed the doctrine in a Jewish metaphor, and to understand it aright, we must examine it, not with Christian, but with Jewish eyes. For that purpose, let us study this expression by the light of these two cases:—

Isaac, old and blind, is sitting in his tent ; like a man who is making his will, engaged, although death was yet distant, in deathbed arrangements. His youngest son, who has passed himself off for the elder brother, and thereby stolen that brother's rights, has just gone out, when Esau, ignorant of the trick that had been so cleverly but so foully played on his father, enters, saying, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me ! The old man, knowing that he had already given away the blessing, but believing that he had bestowed it on Esau, surprised at the request, says, Who art thou ? The answer, "I am thy son, thy first-born Esau," struck Isaac with sudden and dire alarm. Fearful that he had given away what he could not recal, and had conferred on another, under the impression that he was the first-born, rights belonging to Esau, Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, "Who ? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him ? yea, and he shall be blessed." Now, the dreadful truth flashed on Esau, and, startling the tents around, he utters "a great and exceeding bitter cry." Unaccustomed to tears, he wept like a woman ; and the calm, subdued, but deep grief of the good old man mingled with the

wild, sweeping, terrible, impetuous torrent of Esau's passions. But vain the flood of grief! He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. "Behold," said Isaac, as he spoke of him who had won the game, and won it by passing himself off as the *first-born*, "I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given him for servants." And so you see from this case, that to be what Esau really was, and what Jacob said he was—to be the *first-born*, and obtain the rights belonging to that condition, was, as a matter of law and order, to be heir and lord of all.

From the tent of the patriarch, turn now to the palace of Jerusalem. Another old man, one worn out with wars and troubles, fills the throne; the sceptre shaking in his palsied hands. It is necessary that Jehoshaphat—for this is he—have a coadjutor and successor; and in seven sons who stand before him, we should think that he had room for choice. What is his decision? "To the six younger he gave great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah, but the kingdom, it is said, gave he to Jehoram." And why? What moved him to that? His princely qualities? He had none. He was a bloody monster; his father's ashes being hardly

cold, when he murdered, in cold blood, all these, his brethren. The kingdom, it is said, gave he to Jehoram ; because he was the *first-born*. And there, again, you see, that to be the first-born, and obtain the rights belonging to that position, was to be heir and lord of all.

Thus, springing from the customs of the country, and by long use and wont, the expression "*first-born*" became among the Jews just another word for head, lord, and sovereign proprietor of all. Of this fact, let me add, we have a most remarkable example in the language of some Jewish rabbins, who have not hesitated to apply that very term to God himself ; calling Jehovah The First-Born of the World, and that in honour, in deepest reverence—meaning thereby to exalt him above all creatures, as prince, and king, and Lord of all. See now, how that which seemed at first sight contrary to our Lord's divinity, is not only consistent with it, but confirmatory of it. In pronouncing him "the first-born of every creature," my text in fact exalts Jesus above all creatures ; and crowns him divine Head, and Lord, and Sovereign of all. Using it as one of his many royal titles, it invests him with the insignia of universal empire. Shewing us the divine heights from which he descended, how should it endear him to our hearts, and recom-

mend him to our glad and grateful acceptance ! How does Calvary grow in wonder, our sins assume a deeper guilt, and our souls rise in value, as we contemplate the glory from which he stooped to bow his head in death upon an ignominious cross ; dying, as is never to be forgotten, “ the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

III. Our Lord, as in this sense “ the first-born of every creature,” existed before all.

One day the door of Egypt’s palace is thrown open, and Joseph—a model of beautiful manhood, mind in his eagle eye, strength in his form, majesty in his manner, and on his countenance that lofty look which bespeaks high virtue and integrity—enters, accompanied by his father. The old man’s step was slow and feeble ; his eyes were dim with age ; a few, thin, silver locks mingled with the snowy beard that flowed down his breast, as he came forward, leaning on Joseph’s arm and bending beneath the weight of years. Struck by the contrast, and moved to respect by his venerable aspect, Pharaoh accosted him with the question, How old art thou ?

Age naturally awakens our respect. That

beautiful command, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," touches a chord in every heart, and is in harmony with the best feelings of our nature ; and so a Greek historian tells how, in the pure and early and most virtuous days of the republic, if an old man entered the crowded assembly, all ranks rose to give room and place to him. Age throws such a character of dignity even over inanimate objects, that the spectator regards them with feelings akin to veneration. We have stood before the hoary and ivy-mantled ruin of a bygone age with deeper feelings of respect than ever touched us in the marble halls and amid the gilded grandeur of palaces. The proudest tree which lifted its umbrageous head and tall form to the skies, never affected us with such strange emotions as an old, withered, wasted trunk, that, hollowed by time into a gnarled shell, still shewed some green signs of life ; nor, as we lingered beneath the shade of that ancient yew, could we look on such an aged tenant of the earth without feelings of veneration, when we thought how it had been bathed by the sun which shone on the cross of Calvary, and stood white with hoar-frost that Christmas night on which angels sang the birth of our Saviour King.

It is a curious thing to stand beside a swathed,

dark, dusty mummy, which some traveller has brought from its tomb on the banks of the Nile ; and to mark the gold-leaf still glittering on the nails of the tapering fingers, and the raven hair still clinging to the mouldering skull, and how, with the arms peacefully folded on the breast, and the limbs stretched out to the full extent, humanity still retains much of its original form. But when we think how many centuries have marched over that dead one's head ; that in this womanly figure, with the metal mirror still beside her, in which she had once admired her departed charms, we see, perhaps the wife of Joseph, perhaps the royal maid, who, coming to give her beauty to the pure embraces of the Nile, received the infant Moses in her protecting arms, our wonder rises into a sort of awe.

Age, indeed, heightens the grandeur of the grandest objects. The bald hoar mountains rise in dignity, the voice of ocean sounds more sublime on her stormy shores, and the starry heavens sparkle with brighter splendour, when we think how old they are ; how long it is since that ocean began to roll, or these lamps of night to shine. Yet these, the first star that ever shone, nay, the first angel that ever sang, are but things of yesterday beside this manger, where, couched in straw and wrapped

in swaddling clothes, a new-born babe is sleeping. "Before Abraham was," or these were, "I am," says Jesus. His mother's maker, and his mother's child, he formed the womb that gave him birth, and, ten thousand ages before, the rock that gave him burial. A child, yet Almighty God ; a son, yet the everlasting Father, his history carries us back into eternity ; and the dignities which he left, those glories which he veiled, how should they lead us to adore his transcendent love, and kneel the lower at his cross to cry, Jesus ! thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women—My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

The Creator.

For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.—COLOSSIANS i. 16.

AS I read my text, it appears plainly to assert, and clearly to demonstrate, the doctrine of our Lord's divinity. There are many doctrines in the Bible, of which men, without any aid from inspiration, have arrived at a more or less clear conception; guided to the discovery of them by no other lights than those of reason and of conscience—therefore Paul says, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." But while this is so, the incarnation of God is entirely a doctrine of divine revelation.

It will make this doctrine stand out pro-

minently as that great and sacred mystery which angels desired to look into, and at the same time serve what I think an important purpose, to direct your attention.—

I. To some of those cases which illustrate the harmony between Natural Religion and our Christian faith. Such, for instance, is—

1. The doctrine of the being of a God. I do not need to open the Bible to learn that; it is enough to open my eyes, and turn them on the great book of nature. It stands legibly written and clearly revealed in its every page. God! that word may be read in the stars and on the face of the sun; it is painted on every flower; traced on every leaf; engraven on every rock; whispered by the winds; sounded forth by the billows of ocean; and may be heard by the dullest ear in the crash of thunder. I believe in the existence of a God, but not in the existence of an atheist; or that any man is so, who can be considered in his sound and sober senses. What should we think of one who attempted to account for other works of beauty and design, as he professes to do for those of God? Here is a classic temple; here stands a statue, designed with such

taste, and executed with such skill, that one almost expects the marble to leap from its pedestal ; here hangs a painting of some dead, beloved one, so life-like as to move our tears ; here, in *Iliad*, or *Æneid*, or *Paradise Lost*, is a poem, full of the grandest thoughts, and clothed in the richest imagery ; here is a piece of delicate, intricate, most ingenious mechanism. Well, let a man tell me gravely that these were the work of chance ; tell me, when I ask who made them, that nobody made them ; tell me, that the arrangement of the letters in this poem, of the colours in that picture, of the features in that statue, was a matter of mere chance—how I should stare at him ! and conclude, without a moment's hesitation, that I had fallen into the company of a raving madman or drivelling idiot. Turning away from such atheistic ravings about the infinitely more glorious works of God, with what delight does reason listen, and with what readiness assent, and with what distinct and hearty voice echo the closing words of the seraphim's hymn, "The whole earth is full of his glory !"

2. Such also is the doctrine that man is a sinner. Who needs to open the Bible to learn that ? It is enough that we open our hearts ; or read by the light of our conscience the blotted records of the past. "I know and approve the

better, and yet follow the worse," was the memorable saying of one of the wisest heathens ; yet it did not need superlative wisdom to arrive at that conclusion. Dr. Livingstone tells us that he found tribes of Africa on whose Cimmerian darkness no straggling ray of revealed truth had ever fallen, ready to admit that they were sinners ; indeed, they held almost everything to be sin which we find forbidden in the word of God. Nor is it possible to read his statements without arriving at this very interesting and important conclusion, that the ten commandments received from God by Moses on Mount Sinai, are but a copy of that much older law which the finger of his Maker wrote on Adam's heart ; and which, though sadly defaced by the fall, may still, like the inscription on a time-eaten and moss-grown stone, be traced on ours. See how guilt reddens in the blush, and consciousness of sin betrays itself in the downcast look of childhood ! Even when men drink up iniquity as the ox drinketh up the water, and wallow in sin as the swine in the mire, there is a conscience within them that convicts of guilt, and warns of judgment. Dethroned, but not exiled from the soul, she still asserts her claims, and fights for her ancient kingdom ; and, resuming the seat of judgment, with no more respect for

them than for beggars, she summons sovereigns to her bar, and thunders on their heads. Felix trembles ; Herod turns pale, dreading in Christ the apparition of the Baptist ; while Cain, fleeing from his brother's grave, wanders away, gloomy and conscience-stricken, into the depths of the forest and the solitudes of an unpeopled world. Like the ghost of a murdered man, conscience haunts the old house, making her awful and ominous voice heard at times by the most hardened sinners. In her, the rudest savage carries a God within him, who warns the guilty, and echoes these words of Scripture, Depart from evil, and do good—Stand in awe and sin not.

3. Such also is the doctrine that sin deserves punishment. Hell is not peculiar to the Bible ; and in vain do men flee from Christianity to escape a doctrine, which, in their anxiety to lull conscience asleep, some reject as one of incredible horrors. If that doctrine forms a valid objection to this book, it forms an equally valid objection to every religious creed which man has held. A great poet has represented the cataracts and rivers, the rocks and glaciers, the hurtling avalanche and rolling thunders of the Alps, and those lovely valleys where summer, attired in a robe of flowers, seems sleeping at the feet of winter, as forming one grand

choir, and with their many-toned voices all proclaiming, "God!" but it is not less solemn and as true, it is no poetic fancy, but a plain, striking fact, that the voices of all nations, rude or polished, civilized or savage, have proclaimed a hell. No heathen religion without its hell; warning its followers of a region lying beyond death where vice shall be overtaken by the doom which it escaped on earth. And in those pictures of the damned, where they show us avarice forced to drink molten gold, and eternal vultures tearing at the heart of lust and cruelty, we recognise the voice of nature as an echo of words we do well to take heed to, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

4. Such also is the doctrine that man cannot save himself. In what creed or in what age of heathenism is man represented as standing upright before his god, demanding justice? In none. All her temples had vicarious sacrifices and atoning altars; and in all man appears on his knees, a suppliant for mercy. These Pagans had more sense than some of us. By the glimmering light of nature, they saw things more clearly than to be satisfied with themselves; and never believed that, through their own merits, they could be their own saviours. Hence their costly offerings; their hecatombs of victims; the painful and horrid sacrifices

by which they sought to propitiate an angry God. They gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul ; and, to the shame of those who will take no trouble to obtain salvation, and grudge the smallest cost for the cause of Christ, they hesitated at nothing by which they could hope to avert heaven's wrath, and win its favour. The voice of that *cromlech* stone, which stands on our moors, in the centre of the old Druids' mystic circle, and whose sloping surface still retains traces of the channel which drained off the blood of beautiful maiden, or grim captive of the fight—the voice of those tears the Indian sheds, as, passionately kissing her babe, she plucks it from her bosom to fling it into the Jumna or Ganges' sacred stream—the voice of those silent ruins which once resounded with the groans of slaughtered victims ; what are these, again, but an imperfect echo of the words, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us?”

5. Such also is the doctrine that the soul survives the stroke of death. Our spiritual, ethereal part had its symbol in the heaven-ascending flame which the heathen carved upon their tombs ; and their hopes of immortality were expressed, as well by the lamp they lighted amid the gloom of the sepulchre, as by the evergreen garlands that crowned

the monuments of their dead. This hope has been a star that shone in every sky ; a flower that bloomed on the most barren soils ; a flame that burned in the coldest bosom. Immortality ! that idea made heroes of cowards. It imparted to weakness a giant's strength. It made the courage of the bravest burn high in the day of battle. It nerves yonder unbending savage to endure, without a groan to gratify his captors or disgrace his tribe, the tortures of fire and stake. Why do these Greeks approach the dead man, on his bier for burial, and, opening his mouth, drop in an *obolus* ?—the coin is passage-money for the surly ferryman who rows the pale ghosts over Styx's stream. And, in that forest grave, around which plumed and painted warriors stand unmoved as statues, why do his tribe bury, with the body of the Indian chief, his canoe and bow and arrows ?—he goes to follow the chase, and hunt the deer in the land where the Great Spirit lives, and the spirits of his fathers have gone. In these customs and beliefs how easy it is to trace a rude copy of the words, "Life and immortality"—"I shall not die, but live."

6. Although I cannot say that the doctrine of a resurrection is to be placed in the same class with beliefs that so remarkably illustrate the harmony between the sacred Scriptures and the voice of

nature, yet may not the hope of a resurrection have sometimes shot, bright as a meteor, across the midnight darkness of heathen grief? That doctrine did, indeed, astonish the Athenians; and its novelty and apparent absurdity led them to pronounce Paul a babbler. To the eye of sense, no doubt, the tomb looks dark as midnight; nor can affection's fondest wishes detect one sign of life in the cold ashes of the grave. Yet may not the feelings which prompted to such tender care of the lifeless body, to lay it out so decently, to bury it with funereal honours, to build it a tomb, more keenly to resent dishonour done to the relics of the dead than to the persons of the living, have suggested the idea of a resurrection? Might not these have given birth to the blissful thought, that after a long night, the sun that had set would rise again; and that the long winter would be followed by a spring, when the dead, like the beautiful flowers that have hid their heads in the ground, would leave their graves to live and bloom anew?

No such truth might be hidden in the heathen legends of the Phoenix that sprung from its ashes into new life; yet there are things in nature which suggest a resurrection of the dead. Such is the well-known analogy presented by the changes which many creatures undergo. The insect, at

first a creeping worm, crawls on the earth, with the ground its home, and the food of its voracious appetite some humble plant, or decaying matter. The time of its first change arrives. It weaves its own shroud ; it makes a coffin itself ; for under the soil, or in some cranny of the wall, or in fissure of rock or tree, as in a catacomb, it seeks a quiet grave ; and there, shrouded, coffined, buried, and to all appearance dead, it lies till its appointed change. The hour arrives. It bursts these cerements ; and comes forth a pure, winged, beautiful creature, to roam henceforth in sunny skies, and find a bed in the bosom and its food in the nectar of odorous flowers. Why should not this change, or that which Paul refers to, have suggested to the heathen what they illustrate to us—a resurrection? He saw our grave in the furrow of the plough ; our burial in the corn dropped into the soil ; our decay in the change undergone by the seed ; and our resurrection, when, bursting its sheath, and pushing aside the clod, and rising green and beautiful, it waves its head in summer days above the ground which had been its grave—“That which thou sowest,” he says, “is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. So also is the

resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body."

But, differing much from all these doctrines, that of God incarnate is one which nature nowhere teaches us ; neither by analogy, nor reason, nor intuition, nor conscience. Our proofs of it, therefore, must be sought for in Scripture, and all our ideas concerning it drawn thence. This mystery, which angels desired to look into, is one to be approached with the faith of a little child—the child whom his father takes out at night to tell him that these little, bright, twinkling lights of the starry sky are blazing suns ; and let deepest gratitude be mingled with the reverence of those whom to save from unutterable woe, the great God veiled his glory, and became a man to die. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Now, in illustration of this doctrine I remark—

II. That the word of God, both here and elsewhere, attributes the work of creation to Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has been connected with creation in beautiful fancies as well as by scriptural statements, and plain facts. For example, there is a flower, very complex and very beautiful, which the piety of other days associated with the sufferings and death of Calvary. In the form and arrangement of its parts it presents some resemblance to the body and nails of the cross ; these are encircled by a halo of floral glory ; and thus, as if men believed that it had been made to anticipate and afterwards left to commemorate our Redeemer's sufferings, they gave it the name of the *passion-flower*. And I remember how, in wooded dell or on the brown heather hill, we were wont to pull up one of the fern tribe, and, having cut its root across, gaze with boyish wonder on the initials of the Saviour's name printed there, as with ink, on the pale wounded stem. And still grander objects in nature have been associated with our Lord. When the mariner, having left our northern latitudes, pushes far southward, he sees a starry cross emerging from the deep ; and as his course tends

still further south, it continues to rise higher in the heavens, till, when the pole-star has dipped beneath the wave, he beholds with awe and wonder, in a constellation of the form of a cross, the sign of salvation blazing above his head—its body and arms formed of brilliant stars.

In these things a devout superstition sought to gratify affections, perhaps more fond than wise ; not that we despise, but rather respect, the feelings which prompted ancient piety even thus to identify our Lord with the wonders and glories of creation. It is not, however, in these devout fancies that we either seek, or see his connection with that kingdom. Inspiration has inscribed the name of Jesus on all we see—sun and stars, flower and tree, rock and mountain, the unstable waters and the solid land ; and also on what we do not nor shall see till death has removed the veil—angels and spirits, the city and heavens of the eternal world. This is no matter of fancy, but a fact. It is a blessed fact. No voice ever sounded more distinctly to my ear than that of revealed truth, proclaiming Jesus Lord of all. How legibly, for example, is that great truth written on the face of my text ! He who runs may read it there ; and to the same effect the Scriptures have precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. In seeking

examples of this, we are embarrassed, not by the scantiness, but by the abundance of our materials. And as in law two or three competent and credible witnesses are held to be worth as many as would crowd the court-house, let me adduce two or three passages which ascribe the work of creation to our Lord, doing so in language plain as facts and clear as noonday.

1. In 1 Corinthians viii. 6, Paul says, "there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom are all things, and we by him.*"

2. In Ephesians iii. 9, Paul also says, "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, *who created all things by Jesus Christ.*"

3. When our Lord stood before his judges and false accusers, as a sheep before her shearers, he was dumb, opening not his mouth—he heard them as if he heard them not. Eager, yet afraid to strike, the high-priest at length rose from his throne, and, fixing his eye on the prisoner, said, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God ! Whereupon, breaking the silence, Jesus replied, Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power,

and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then, we are told, the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses?" And now, in seeking to crown Christ with honours which his enemies foully denied him, may I not borrow the words of that murderer's mouth, and after Paul, in these passages from Corinthians and from Ephesians, has so clearly attributed the work of creation to Jesus, ask What further need have we of witnesses? But to have two witnesses, call in John ; and ask him what he has to say on this great subject, what evidence he has to give, what testimony he can bear? How full, distinct, and clear his answer! Speaking by inspiration, and with finger pointed to Christ, he says, "*All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*" Thus he writes concerning him, of whom, in the same chapter, he says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

Did these inspired apostles foresee a day when, walking in the light of their own fire, and in the sparks which they had kindled, presumptuous men would rise up in the church to deny the divinity of our Lord ; and, with it, to deny, in course of time, all the doctrines of which it forms the key-stone? It would seem so ; if one may judge from

their anxious care to make plain statements still more plain. To make assurance doubly sure, to place our faith on a foundation secure against all assaults, observe, I pray you, how the evangelist is not content with simply saying that all things were made by Christ, but adds, as if to double-lock the door against the approaching heresy, "*without him was not anything made that was made.*" Wonderful news to tell in a sinner's ear!—the stupendous fabric of creation, yonder starry vault, this magnificent world, were the work of those hands by which Jesus hung, a mangled form, on the cross of Calvary!

No harps out of heaven, or in it, ever sounded in more perfect harmony than the words of John with the language of Paul in my text. It is the statement of John expanded—the bud blown out into a flower—the solid gold beaten out into a broader surface. And see the same anxiety here also that there shall be no mistake! What care is taken of our faith! Paul would prevent the shadow of a doubt crossing our minds about our Lord having a right to the divine honours of Creator. "By him," he says, "all things were created;" and as if an angel, standing at his side when he penned these words, had stooped down to whisper in his ear that men, attempting to rob

Jesus of his honour, would rise to throw doubt over that truth and explain it away—to make the truth still more plain, he adds, “that are in heaven and that are in earth.” Not content with that, he uses yet more comprehensive terms ; and to embrace all the regions of God’s universe above the earth and beyond the starry bounds of heaven, he adds, “visible and invisible.” Nor leaves his task till, sweeping the highest and the lowest things, men and worms, angels and insects, all into Christ’s hands, he adds, “whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.”

Thanks be to God that a doctrine so precious is written in language so plain ; and that the puny arm of mortal man may as soon pluck the sun from the heavens, as our Lord’s divinity out of this text. Stephen, gazing with dying eye through the opened heavens, beheld Jesus at the right hand of God ; and where else should he see him—the man of sorrows whom Paul here exalts to the throne of an adoring universe ? In the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. Let believers take the full comfort of a doctrine which is so fraught with honour to God and salvation to man. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad. Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, rejoice. Are you afraid ? Are you in trouble ?

Are you racked with cares? Do earthly or spiritual fears disturb your peace, and cast a cold dark shadow on your soul? Does your faith faint, stagger? Rise from your knees; go forth this night; leave the cross, that monument of his love, to contemplate the monuments of his power; stand beneath heaven's resplendent arch; and when, led on by the pale evening star, Orion and Arcturus and the sweet Pleiades, and all the heavenly host in harmonious order, as to the music of higher spheres, come marching on across the field of darkness, list to the noble utterance of the old Hebrew prophet! He speaks of your Lord and Saviour! and what courage his words should inspire, as, raising his arm to the starry skies, he exclaims, "Behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? —He giveth power to the faint.—They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The End of Creation.

All things were created for Him.—COLOSSIANS i. 16.

WHEN Ulysses returned with fond anticipations to his home in Ithaca, his family did not recognise him. Even the wife of his bosom denied her husband—so changed was he by twenty years, and the hardships of a long-protracted war. It was true of the vexed and astonished Greek as of a nobler King, that “he came unto his own, and his own received him not.” In this painful position of affairs he called for a bow which he had left at home, when, embarking for the siege of Troy, he bade farewell to the orange-groves and vine-clad hills of Ithaca. With characteristic sagacity, he saw how a weapon, so stout and tough that none but himself could draw it, might be made to witness on his behalf. He seized it. Like a green wand lopped from willow-tree, it yields to his arms; bends till the bow-string touches his ear. His wife, now sure that he is her

long-lost and long-lamented husband, throws herself with surprise and joy into his fond embraces, and his household confess him the true Ulysses.

If I may compare small things with great, our Lord gave such proof of his divinity when he too stood in his own house as a stranger ; despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He bent the stubborn laws of nature to his will, proving himself Creator by his mastery over creation. The winds that sweep the deep, and the wild sea they sweep, alike controlled ; leprosy and palsy healed ; the rolling eye of madness calmed ; shrouded corpse and buried dead restored to life by a word, calmly spoken after the manner and with the power of a master ;—one wonders that the spectators of these things did not fall down to worship ; and, recognising God in the guise of man, exclaim, “The voice of the Lord is powerful ; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” Nothing could be more sublime than that scene on the Lake of Galilee, when Jesus stood with tranquil aspect on the bow of the reeling boat, and while the storm played around, and the spray flew in sheets over his naked head, calmly eyed the war, and raising his hand, said, “Peace, be still !” and nothing could be more conclusive than the evidence these waves and winds afforded, that the

Master himself was come—a truth seen in the stars mirrored in the placid waters, and heard in the deep silence of winds lulled, and wild waves at rest. By that sudden hush, nature proclaimed Jesus God, Lord, and Creator of all. Declared to be so by inspired tongues, and such strange witnesses as winds and waves, devils, disease, death, and the grave, heaven concurs in their testimony ; by the voices of its saints and angels, of its worship, hymns, harps, and hallelujahs, proclaiming him Creator and Lord of all.

Let us in imagination pass the angel porters of those gates where no error enters, and, entering that sanctuary which no discord divides nor heresy disturbs, let us find out who worship and who is worshipped there. The law, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,” extends, and must extend, to heaven as well as to earth ; therefore, if our Lord is but the highest of all created beings, we shall find him not the worshipped, but a worshipper ; looking up to God from his lofty, and to other creatures unapproachable, pinnacle, as does the highest snow-crowned Alp to the sun, which, fixed far above it, bathes its head in light. We seek him, I shall suppose, in the group where his mother sits with the other Marys ; seek him among the twelve

apostles ; or where David, leader of the heavenly choir, strikes his harp ; or where the beggar, reclining on Abraham's bosom, forgets his wrongs ; or where martyrs and confessors, and they which have come out of great tribulation, with robes of purest white and crowns of brightest glory, swell the song of salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb—he is not there. Rising upwards, we seek him where angels hover on wings of light, or, with feet and faces veiled, bend before a throne of dazzling glory—nor is he there ; he does not belong to their company —“for, verily, he took not on him the nature of angels.”

Eighteen hundred years ago Mary is rushing through the streets of Jerusalem, speed in her steps, wild anxiety in her look, and this one question to all on her eager lips, Have you seen my son ? —and eighteen hundred years ago, on these same streets, some Greeks accost a Galilean fisherman, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Now, were we to enter heaven, and, bent like his mother or these Greeks on seeing him, to stay a passing angel, and accost him in the words, “Sir, we would see Jesus,” what would he do ? How would his arm rise, and his finger point us upward to the throne as he fell down to worship, and swell that flood of song

which in this one full stream mingles the names of the Father and of the Son—"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." The scene which heaven presents, its worship, its voices which sounded on John's ear as the voice of many waters, these all are in perfect harmony with the honours and divine offices assigned to our Lord in these words of Paul, "All things were created for him."

In directing your attention now to the purpose for which Christ created all things, I remark—

I. That my text furnishes another proof of our Lord's divinity.

He occupies the position of a servant who works for others ; he of a master, who by other hands, or his own, works for himself. Applying that remark to the case before us, look to the condition of man. Whatever office he fills in providence, he is a servant ; and on crowned monarchs, who are, and should consider themselves, but upper servants, as well as on the lowest menials, Paul lays this duty, Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. God being our end, as well as our beginning, we are to do nothing

for ourselves ; but all for him. Nor do angels, though holding a much higher rank in creation, differ from us in that respect. On the contrary, as we see the law which rolls rivers to the sea, and rounds the tears on our cheek, illustrated on its grandest scale in those skies where suns roll, and stars shine, and wandering comets travel, so, if we would see the law of love producing its grandest service, and most perfect servants, we must look to heaven. There no wing flies, nor harp sounds, nor heart beats, but in harmony with this 'great moral law, "Do all to the glory of God." Ever engaged in God's service, hear what is said of its native inhabitants, "He shall give his angels charge over thee ;" "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify ;" "See thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant ;" "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation ?" Thus, whether they descend on our world to open a prison or roll back the sea, to predict the birth of a Samson or celebrate the advent of a Saviour, to blow the coals that dress Elijah's meal or kindle the fire that lays Sodom in ashes, to sing "peace" over the rude cradle of the new-born King or sound the trump that rends the tomb and wakes the dead, they do nothing for themselves. Not ashamed, but glorying in their service, they respond

to the call, Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts ; ye ministers of his that do *his* pleasure.

But whose pleasure does my text represent our Lord as doing ; or for whom, in the work of creation, does it represent him as acting ? " All things were created " not only *by* him, but "*for* him." "*For* him !" What a depth of meaning, and manifest divinity in that plain, little word ! You might pile one lofty expression upon another up to heaven, but you could say nothing more of God ; for it is said of God, as his own peculiar and divine prerogative, " The Lord hath made all things *for himself*."

Some have attempted to evade the argument for Christ's divinity, which is based on the fact of his having created all things. They cannot deny the fact, but they dispute the inference ; objecting and alleging, that in creating all things Christ did so not by his own inherent power, but by such power as Elijah received from God to restore the widow's son, or Elisha to lay bare the bed of Jordan. But, apart from other answers with which such objectors may be triumphantly met, observe how my text cuts the ground out below their feet. Did Elijah bring back the dead, and his successor

divide the flood *for* themselves? Was it for their own glory ; for any ends of their own? That will not be alleged. If not, then there is no analogy between their miraculous, and our Lord's creating works.

If our Lord Jesus Christ was other and less than God, then, in creating the sun and lighting up the starry sky, he no more acted for himself than the domestic, who, coming to the call, lights my lamp, or stoops on the hearth-stone to kindle my fire. It is the very nature of a creature to be a dependent, and hold a servant's place ; nor was any man ever more justly condemned to die than Jesus, if he were but a creature. In that case he did undoubtedly lay himself open to the charge of blasphemy, since—as the Jews truly averred, and he never denied, nor so much as attempted to explain it away—he made himself the Son of God, “equal with God.” Our Lord did so ; claimed divine equality in such plain terms as to justify the use by Paul of this bold language, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” A grand claim ! the majesty of which was brought out more clearly by the meanness of his circumstances, as the rainbow looks the brighter the blacker the cloud it spans. Deserted by the world, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, dependent on a

few humble followers for the most common necessities of life, within some hours of an ignominious end, his foot already on the verge of the grave, he rises to the loftiness of Godhead ; and, turning on earth and heaven an eye soon to be darkened in death, he claims a community of property with God himself. "All things that the Father hath are mine," so he said. He speaks to God ; and to the "all mine are thine," this dying man adds, "thine are mine"—thy eternity, throne, glory, crown, and sceptre, all are mine. Great words these, pregnant with the strongest consolation ! For, if in the nature of things all that is God's is Christ's, since by the terms of the New Covenant, all that is Christ's is ours, these words draw all that belongs to God into the hands of the humblest believer. What comfort should this faith give you ! What courage should it impart to you ! What gratitude should it beget in you ! Thus rich in poverty, full in emptiness, and strong in weakness, with what blessed peace may a believer lie in Jesus' arms, saying with David, "I will fear none evil ;" or with Paul in view of either work or war, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me !"

II. My text shews that the glory of God was the original purpose of creation ; “ All things were created—for him.”

Sin has to some extent blighted the beauty of creation. Still, to borrow the words of the Psalmist, “ The heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” Nor is it distance that here lends enchantment to the view. On the contrary, the more closely the works of God are examined, the higher our admiration rises ; and the less cause there is to fear that true science will ever appear as the antagonist, and not the ally of the faith. Whether we turn the telescope on heavens so full of stars as to seem like a dark purple ground sprinkled with gold-dust—or the microscope on such comparatively humble objects as a plant of moss, a drop of ditch water, the scaly armour of a beetle, a spider’s eye, the down of a feather, or the dust on a butterfly’s wing, such divine beauty, wisdom, and glory, burst into view,

as instantly to arrest even childhood's roving mind. The dullest are moved to wonder ; the most groveling souls take wing and rise up to God. He enters our souls by the open portal of every sense. We see a divine glory in worms, and unapproachable excellence in a moth ; and hear in the roar of the storm, the boom of breakers, the sudden crash and far-rolling peals of thunder, the soft murmuring of brooks, the gleesome melody of budding woods, the music of the lark, as, like a parting spirit, she spurns the earth and wings her flight to heaven, nature's voice echoing the closing strain of the angel's hymn, The whole earth is full of his glory.

When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy over our new-born world, that, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," formed, perhaps, the burden of their song. And when Adam sat by his beautiful bride, and the shaggy lion crouched like a dog at their feet, and the beams of the setting sun threw a golden splendour over their bower of eglantine and roses, and the feathered tribes from all the groves of paradise poured forth gushes of sweetest melody, perhaps ere they lay down to rest, with their arms and hearts entwined, they took it for their vesper-hymn, and sang,

while God and angels listened, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory."

The harp of Eden is broken. An exiled race have hung it, unstrung and mute, on the willows ; and now Ichabod stands written in the furrows of man's guilty forehead, and on the ruins of his estate. Many things, unaffected by the blight of sin, remain as God made them, for himself—the flowers have lost neither their bloom nor fragrance ; the rose smells as sweet as when bathed in the dews of paradise ; and seas and seasons, obedient to their original impulse, roll on as of old to their Maker's glory. But from man, alas ! the glory is departed. See his body when the light of his eye is quenched, and the countenance is changed, and his form lies festering in corruption—mouldering into the dust of death. Or, change still more hideous, look at his soul ! The spirit of piety dead, the mind under a dark eclipse, hatred to God rankling in that once loving heart, it retains but the vestiges of its original grandeur ; just enough, like the beautiful tracery and noble arches of a ruined pile, to make us feel what glory once was there—and now is gone. What glory does God get from any of us ? Like a son who brings his father's grey hairs to the grave, or a daughter who, fallen into the lowest degrada-

tion, is the shame of her family, we are a dishonour and a disgrace to the Author of our being. I am not employing language too strong ; God uses still stronger terms. As if his were the feelings of a father who wishes that he had been childless, or of a mother who esteems the barren happy, this is written of him, “*It repented* the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it *grieved* him at his heart.” What a horrible thing is sin !

Yet God’s object in creating man was not defeated ; and in illustration of that, I remark—

III. That God will make even the wicked and their sins redound to his glory.

A strange machine is this of providence ! How slowly some wheels move, while others whirl round so rapidly that the eye cannot catch the flying spokes : some turn in one direction, and others in the very opposite. Here, sight to wonder at, Virtue is struggling amid the temptations of poverty ; and there Piety sits a mendicant, clothed in rags, and covered with a mass of sores ; and there, again, the wicked in great power spreads himself like a green bay tree—not seldom like the deadly upas, which is said to poison the air around it, and kill all that comes within its noxious shade.

In the arrangements of this world it often seems as if confusion, or confusion worse confounded, reigned. Sin triumphs ; and in the success of the ungodly, who have no changes and no bands in their death, men and devils seem to defeat the purposes of God.

Defeat the purposes of God ? Impossible. As you stood some stormy day on a sea-cliff, and marked the billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its headlong course, and hurl it back into the ocean ? Did you ever stand beneath the lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap, as it shot and flashed, dazzling, athwart the gloom, and think that you could grasp the bolt, and change its path ? More foolish and vain his thought, who fancies that he can arrest or turn aside the purposes of God, saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him ?"—"Let us break his bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from us." Break his bands asunder ! How he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ! And poor, benighted sinner, do you suppose, that in the full swing and unbridled license of your passions you are serving yourself—are your own master ? Be assured that it is with you as it was with Pilate,

and the chief priests, the Jews, and Judas also. A high hand controlled their movements, and these enemies of God "were gathered together to do that which, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was appointed to be done."

Do you, for instance, injure a godly man? God is using you to train up his child in the grace of patience. Do you defraud him? God is using you to detach his heart from the world, and loosen the roots that bind it to the earth. Do you deceive him? God is using you to teach him not to put his trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Do you wound his feelings? You are a knife in God's hand to loosen the skin of a bark-bound tree, or prune its branches that it may bring forth more fruit. Messenger of Satan! dost thou buffet an apostle? God uses thee to keep him humble, and to teach him to wear his honours meekly. Oppressor of the church! dost thou cast an apostle into prison? God uses thee, thy dungeon, and thy chains, to shew how he will answer prayer, and bring his people out of their sorest troubles—saving, as he saved Peter, at the very uttermost. King of Egypt! with thy guards around thee, flattered by thy courtiers, backed by thy magicians, with thy haughty looks art thou thwarting God, and in hardening thy heart and

refusing to let Israel go, promoting thine own ambitious, selfish, grasping ends? Fool, what a mistake! "In very deed," said the Lord to Pharaoh, "for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." His obstinacy affords the occasion which God uses to turn a great kingdom into a stage whereon to display the glory of his majesty. What must have been the surprise, the rage, the mortification of that imperious tyrant, to find himself, after all that he and his bleeding country had suffered, but a tool in the hands of the Hebrews' God! God took a revenue of glory out of him; and he will sooner or later take the same out of all his enemies.

No man liveth for himself; there is a sense in which that is universally true. And the boldest sinners may rest assured that when the complicated machine of providence has done its work, and the secret purposes of God are fully completed, and things old and worn out are replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, it shall be seen that "the Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Oh that men would turn now and seek his mercy—his gracious, much-needed, freely-offered, all-sufficient, soul-saving mercy. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,

and ye perish from the way. When God is willing to forgive and forget, has sent his Son to seek you, and sends his Spirit to plead with you, why should you perish? Reject salvation, and you must perish. For, though the very enemies of his people are after a fashion serving God, it is as the rod which a kind father reluctantly uses to chasten his son, and which, when it has answered its purpose, he breaks in two, and casts into the fire.

IV. Since Christ hath made all things for himself, his people are emphatically called to consecrate themselves, and their all, to his glory.

To this duty you are called, by the obligations of both a natural and spiritual creation ; by your descent from the first, and also from the second Adam. To live, to watch, to work, to suffer, and to sacrifice for him who, loving us, spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, and for him also who, loving us, washed us from our sins in his own blood, is our plain, bounden duty ; let me rather say, for duty is a cold word, should be our daily and supreme delight. I do not say that it is plain sailing to heaven ; nor that the duty we owe to Christ may not expose us to what the world accounts, and flesh and blood feel, to be pain.

Be it so ! What pains Jesus endured, what sacrifices he submitted to for us !

Besides, how should it make us take suffering joyfully to think that it is those who are crucified with him on earth that shall be crowned with him in heaven. None else. They win in this game that lose ; they live in this warfare that die. If we be dead with him, we shall live with him ; if we suffer, we shall reign with him. "He that loseth his life shall find it."

Surely, if there be such things as true, tender, sacred, eternal obligations, such are those that bind us who, to speak the plain truth, but for Christ had been suffering hell's intolerable torment—had never even hoped to set foot in heaven. What owest thou thy Lord, is a sum you cannot reckon. Therefore, be your money millions or mites, your talents ten or two, your hearts young and green, or seared and withered, lay them at a Saviour's feet. Let his glory be your glorious aim !—an end this, worth living for. A life such as that, elevating and ennobling the humblest lot, shall command the regards, and fix on a man the gaze of angels. Lofty ends impart dignity to the lowest offices. It is, for instance, an honest, but you would not call it an honourable occupation to pull an oar ; yet if that oar impels the life-boat over

mountain waves and through roaring breakers, he who has stripped for the venture, and, breaking away from wife and mother and children, has bravely thrown himself into the boat to pull for yonder wreck, and pluck his drowning brothers from the jaws of death, presents, as from time to time we catch a glimpse of him on the crest of the billow, a spectacle of grandeur which would withdraw our eyes from the presence even of a queen, surrounded with the blaze and glittering in the pomp of royalty.

Take another illustration, drawn from humblest life. Some years ago, on a winter morning, two children were found frozen to death. They were sisters. The elder child had the younger in her lap, closely folded within her lifeless arms. She had stripped her own thinly-clad form to protect its life, and, to warm the icy fingers, had tenderly placed its little hands in her own bosom; and pitying men and weeping women did stand and gaze on the two dead creatures, as, with glassy eyes and stiffened forms, they reclined against a bank of snow—the days of their wandering and mourning ended, and heaven's own snow not purer than that true sister's love. Though houseless, homeless beggars, not on that account, had I gazed on that touching group, would I have shed one tear the

less, or felt less deeply that it was a display of true love, and human nature in its least fallen aspect, which deserved to be embalmed in poetry and sculptured in marble.

Yes ; and however humble the Christian's walk, or mean his occupation, it matters not. He who lives for the glory of God, has an end in view which lends dignity to man and to his life. Common iron, brought into contact with a magnet, will borrow its strange, attractive virtue, and become magnetic. The merest bit of crystal, that has been flung out into the field and trampled on the ground, shines like a diamond when sunbeams kiss it. And who has not seen the dullest rain cloud, when it turned its face to the sun, change into glory ; and, in the bow that spans it, present to the eyes of age and infancy, alike of the philosopher who studies and of the joyous child who runs to catch it, the most brilliant and beautiful phenomenon in nature ? Thus, from what they look at and come in contact with, common things acquire uncommon glory.

Live, then, "looking unto Jesus ;" live for nothing less or lower than God's glory ; and these ends will lend grandeur to your life, and shed a heavenly lustre on your station, however humble it be. Yes. Though lodged in the rudest cottage,

and his occupation only to sweep a street, let a man of piety so sweep a street, that God is glorified through the honest and diligent doing of his duty, men are led to speak, and think, better of religion. He forms a link between earth and heaven ; associates himself with holy angels ; and, though at a humble distance, treads in the steps of him who, uniting divinity to humanity, as our Maker made all things for himself, and as our brother, whether he ate or drank or whatsoever he did, did all to the glory of God. Doing so, he left us an example that we should follow his steps. Go and do likewise. Glorify God and you shall enjoy him. Labour on earth, and you shall rest in heaven ; for Christ judges them to be the men of worth, who are the men of work. Be thy life then devoted to his service—now for the work, hereafter for the wages ; earth for the cross, and heaven for the crown. Go thy way, assured that there is not a prayer you offer, nor word you speak, nor foot you walk, nor tear you shed, nor hand you hold out to the perishing, nor warning you give to the careless, nor wretched child you pluck from the streets, nor visit paid to the widow or fatherless, nor loaf of bread you lay on a poor man's table, nor anything you do for the love of God or man, but is faithfully registered in the chronicles of the kingdom ; and

shall be publicly read, when calling you up from a post perhaps as mean as Mordecai's, Jesus shall crown your brows before an assembled world, saying, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Christ in Providence.

By him all things consist.—COLOSSIANS i. 17.

GOD'S work of providence is "his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing of all his creatures and all their actions." It has no Sabbath. No night suspends it, and from its labours God never rests. If, for the sake of illustration, I may compare small things with great, it is like the motion of the heart. Though it beats our march to the grave, since the day we began to live, this organ has never ceased to throb—our limbs grow weary ; not it—we sleep ; it never sleeps—needing no repose to recruit its strength, it beats in every pulse by night and day ; and, supplying nourishment to the meanest as well as to the noblest organs of our frame, with measured, steady, untired stroke, it drives the blood along the bounding arteries, without the exercise of our will, and even when all consciousness of existence is lost in sleep.

If philosophy is to be believed, our world is

but an outlying corner of creation ; bearing, perhaps, as small a proportion to the great universe, as a single grain to all the sands of the sea-shore, or one quivering leaf to the foliage of a forest. Yet, within this earth's narrow limits, how vast the work of Providence ! The mind is lost in contemplating it ! How great that Being whose hand paints every flower, and shapes every leaf ; who forms every bud of the trees, and every infant in the darkness of the womb ; who, with a parent's care, feeds each crawling worm, and watches over insect life ; who throws open the golden gates of day, and draws around a sleeping world the dusky curtains of the night ; who measures out the drops of every shower, the whirling snow-flakes, and the sands of man's eventful life ; who determines alike the fall of a sparrow and the fate of a kingdom ; and so overrules the tide of human fortunes, that whatever befall him, come joy or sorrow, the believer says, *It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good.*

In ascribing this great work to Jesus Christ, my text calls us to render him divine honours. In the hands that were once nailed to the cross, it places the sceptre of universal empire ; and on those blessed arms that, once thrown around a mother's neck, now tenderly enfold every child of

God, it hangs the weight of worlds. Great indeed is the mystery of godliness ! Yet it is plainly written in the words, "By him all things consist." By him angels preserve their holiness, and the stars their orbits ; the tides roll along the deep, and the seasons through the year ; kings reign, and princes decree justice ; the church of God is held together, riding out the rudest storms ; and by him, until the last of his elect are plucked from the wreck, and his purposes of mercy are all accomplished, this guilty world is kept from sinking under a growing load of sins.

"By him all things consist." Wonderful words, as spoken of one who, some eighteen centuries ago, was a houseless wanderer ; a pensioner on woman's charity ; and not seldom without a place where to lay his head ! Yet how clearly do these words attest his dignity and divinity ! More could not be said of God ; and Paul will not say less of Christ. Nor, great and glorious as they are, do they stand alone. Certainly not. In language as lofty, and ascribing to Jesus honours no less divine, the apostle thus writes to the Hebrews, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by

whom also he made the worlds ; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and *upholding all things by the word of his power*, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." How wonderful ! He left a grave to ascend the throne ; he exchanged a place beside the dying thief for the right hand of God ; he dropped a reed, to assume the sceptre of earth and heaven ; he put off a wreath of thorns, to wear a sovereign's crown ; and, in that work of providence to which I would now turn your attention, you behold him, who died to save the chief of sinners, made "Head over all things to the church."

- I. His providence appears in those extraordinary events which lead his people, and often compel his enemies, to acknowledge the hand of God.

I do not speak of miraculous events ;—as when the sea opened her gates to the flying Israelites, and man's extremity proved God's opportunity ; as when the ravens, deserting their nests to cater for the prophet, hunted the fields to supply his table ; as when hungry lions lay crouched like lambs at Daniel's feet ; as when the sun set at

noonday over the cross of Calvary, or shone at midnight on the hills of Gibeon. It is to another kind of events that I refer ; and of these—

1. Job's history furnishes a notable example. Satan has gone forth from the presence of the Lord, armed with this commission, "Behold all that he hath is in thy power ; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." The devil cannot go a step further against the saints than God gives him chain. That is great comfort ; yet how ruthlessly and malignantly the Enemy of man used his power against the patriarch, you know. The gallant ship that, with songs below, and gay dances on her deck, was sailing on a summer day over a glassy sea, in her sky no clouds, in her snowy sheets but wind enough to waft her home, and of which, by nightfall, the only vestiges are some broken timbers afloat in the foam which the wild waves grind on the horrid reef, presents a striking image of the change that one short, eventful day brought on the house and fortunes of this man of God. One following hard upon another, like successive shocks of an earthquake, the messengers of disaster come. Ruin ! ruin, is on their lips, as, pale with terror, and panting for breath, they arrive with their tidings, and that ever-recurring close to each woful tale, "I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Cattle,

flocks, camels, all his property gone, Job is beggared. Yet his children are safe ; and with seven gallant sons and three fair daughters, he still is rich—these spared, let all else perish ! But ah ! the next wave, towering, cresting high over head, falls on his labouring bark, and, sweeping the deck, leaves none standing there, but himself and a frantic mother ; not theirs the consolation of her, who, reaching the shore with a living babe, presses it to her bosom, and holds herself compensated for all other losses. They are dead, cries the last messenger ; dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Dead ! We almost expect to see himself fall—stunned, killed by this crowning, this overwhelming stroke. But no. Greatest of heroes, spectacle for angels to admire, and pattern for believers to imitate in the hour of adverse fortune, he arose and worshipped—arose as the ball which rebounds the higher the harder it is struck ; as the eagle which soars to her loftiest flight not in serene, but in tempestuous skies. Owning the Providence in whose hand Sabea and Chaldean, fiery thunderbolt and roaring whirlwind, were only instruments, Job bows before the throne of God ; and says, with a patience more uncommon even than his trials, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither : the Lord gave, and

the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."

2. The history of God's church is filled with remarkable illustrations of marvellous, though not miraculous, providences. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," said our Lord ; and when—now sleeping, now gently breathing, now sighing as in sorrow, now shrieking as in pain, now roaring in mad-like fits of rage, and now howling round the house—it shakes every door and window to get in, the wind seems as uncontrolled and uncontrollable as any element of nature. But when, some three hundred years ago, it rose in its resistless might, and swept in hurricane gusts from heaven to scatter the hopes of Rome and the pride of Spain, it was surely, to use the words of scripture, "stormy wind fulfilling his word." So I believe. In that crisis of the church's fate, Popery and secular despotism, ecclesiastical and political tyranny, united their forces, as they threaten to do again, to crush the liberties of mankind, and quench the light of the Reformation in the blood of its professors. Never had winds wafted, nor, since keel first ploughed its waves, had the sea borne such a fleet as, confident of victory, came ruffling down in pride on the coasts of England. The hearts of many trembled ; nothing under God reassuring them

but the noble attitude in which England rose, headed by her maiden Queen, to meet the foe. Who could not fight, could pray. Earnest supplications were therefore made continually; nor made in vain. And so, when cannon pealed along the deep, and gun to gun, yard-arm to yard-arm, they fought the Spaniard in sight of home, One descended into that battle, as unlooked for by the foe as the fourth who walked the fiery furnace with the three Hebrews in the brave days of old.

God mingled in the fight. "He did fly upon the wings of the wind;" and with black tempests swept the enemy to destruction. Storm rose, and roared upon the back of storm; scattering that boastful navy, until, where it had ridden in its pride, nothing was seen but the crests of the angry sea, nor heard but thundering breakers and the scream of the wild sea-mew. And while the hurricane was pursuing them along the island, and strewing our own northern shores with the corpses and the wreck of that proud Armada, the people of England repaired to the house of God, to acknowledge his providence in this great deliverance, and sing of the "stormy wind fulfilling his word."

3. Again, the finger of God has been often marvellously revealed in the detection and punish-

ment of crime. Men have stood astonished, and been constrained to say, There was a providence in that! By some remarkable and unlooked-for circumstance, God himself has cleared away every doubt; and said, with his finger pointed at the trembling wretch, Thou, thou art the man! One night, for instance, some years ago, a person in this city awoke to find his house plundered. The alarm was raised, nor was it long ere the officers of justice found a clue. The thief, wounding his hand as he escaped by the window, had left a red witness behind him. The watchman flashed his lantern on the spot. Drop by drop, blood stained the pavement. They tracked it on, and on, and ever on, till this silent guide conducted them along an open passage, and up a flight of steps—stopping at a door. They broke in; and there found the bleeding hand, the booty, and the criminal. Now, a shower of rain would have washed away the stain; a fall of snow would have hid it; the foot of some wretched street-walker, some midnight reveller, would have effaced it; but no, the crime was one of peculiar atrocity, and there God kept the damning spot. And so, unless they be forgiven, covered by the righteousness and washed away in the blood of Jesus, shall your sins find you out—they wait to meet you at the bar of God. The step of his justice

may be slow, but it is sure ; and I implore sinners to flee from the exposures and the wrath to come : for, “ Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light ; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops,”—“ God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”

Who should not own in such remarkable events the hand of providence ? That man incurred double guilt, who, passing dryshod through the Red Sea between two walls of water, thought no more of God than you or I, perhaps, have done, when, on a bright summer day, beneath the shade of overhanging trees, and on a carpet of heath and wild flowers, we were threading some mountain gorge. He, too, incurred double guilt, who, rising with the dawn, and, ere the sun had shot a slant ray across the desert, left his tent to gather manna fresh fallen from dewy skies, thinking no more of God than yonder band, that, with talk and songs and laughter, sweep down the golden corn, or, when sheaves are stacked and fields are cleared, with gleesome dances keep harvest-home. “ Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her, for she is a king’s daughter,” were Jehu’s orders ; and doubly guilty were his messengers if, as they drove away the dogs that were

crunching Jezebel's skull and saw the curse of an avenging prophet, they thought no more of God's righteous judgments, than the rude brutal mob which executions gather from low lanes and alleys around the gallows-tree.

It is good to see God's hand in every extraordinary event, but it is better to see his providence in everything ; saying with David, I have set the Lord always before me. How happy such a frame of mind ! I cherish the memory of one over whose life of trials it shed a perpetual sunshine. A widow with a helpless family, she had left father and mother, and house and lands, for Jesus' sake, and had met her full share of trials. Yet nothing came wrong to her ; nor did leaden cares ever sit long or press heavy on her saintly breast—her bearing often reminding me of the beautiful words of Luther, when, in an hour of alarm and anxious councils, he pointed his companion to a little bird, perched on a bending branch and pouring forth a gush of song on the ear of evening, to say, Happy fellow ! he leaves God to think for him. Do that. Leave God to think and to care for you. Let Faith behold Christ on his throne, with the hand of a God and the sympathies of a man guiding the helm of your fortunes, and you may go to sleep in the rudest storm. Let storms rage ; who has his head

pillowed on Jesus' bosom, and feels himself enfolded in the arms of providence, may fulfil the high command, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Child of God! take your rest. He who keeps watch by you, never sleeps.

II. God in Christ presides over ordinary as well as extraordinary events.

By him all things consist. Every object in nature is impressed with his footprints; each new day repeats the wonders of creation. Yes; there is not a morning but we open our eyes on a scene as wonderful as that which fixed the gaze of Adam when he awoke into existence. Nor is there an object—be it pebble or pearl, weed or rose, the flower-spangled sward or the star-spangled sky, a worm or an angel, a drop of water or a boundless ocean—in which intelligence may not discern, and piety may not adore, the providence of him who assumed our nature that he might save our souls. If God is not in all the thoughts of the wicked, he is in everything else. And since the comfort of his

people rests so much on the conviction that the Lord reigneth, that his hand rules every event, that a wise, and most kind, as well as holy Providence presides over our daily fortunes and all things else besides, let me proceed, by some familiar examples, to illustrate that noble truth.

1. Let me show you Providence in a snowdrop—a flower we all know, and love, and hail as the fair harbinger of spring. And in this I follow the example of him who extracted from flowers truths more beautiful than their colours, more precious than their most fragrant odours. All the plants that clothe the earth with varied beauty, and, combining the useful with the beautiful, supply food to the animal creation, depend for continued existence on their flowers turning into fruit. Now, the fructification of the snowdrop depends, if I may say so, on the modesty—in it as elsewhere the associate of purity—with which, shrinking from its own boldness, it hangs its beautiful head. Let it lift its head up with the pride of a lily, and this herald of spring perishes from the face of the earth, like the race of a childless man. But God has provided against such an event. Teaching us how the greatest and smallest things in providence have often mutual and important connections, this vast globe and that little flower, in regard to their

weight, have been so suited to each other, that its bells are pendent. Drawn downwards by the force of gravity, they take that pendent position without which they had produced no fruit ; yet one which they had not assumed, had our planet been no larger than Mars or Mercury. See, then, how God takes care of a humble flower !—how much more of you and of your families, O ye of little faith ?

2. Let me take an example from a circumstance which, at first sight, appears to shake, rather than to confirm, our confidence in a presiding Providence. That plants may produce fruit in our climate, their flowers, warmly wrapped within the folds of the buds, must sleep the winter through—waiting for the breath of spring, and the embraces of a summer sun. Well ; we are meditating on the care which God takes of many tender plants, by either wrapping them in a warm mantle of snow, or causing them to seek shelter beneath the surface, when our meditations are suddenly arrested, and our trust in God's providence somewhat shaken, by a plant which spreads out its blossoms, like unrequited love, to the cold beams of the winter day. The frost has bound the soil, the ice has chained the streams, the hoary rime, like a work of magic, has turned every tree to silver, and there is no heat in

the keen cutting air for that flower to produce its fruit ; but it is with it, as with our souls when God withdraws the joys of salvation and the influences of his Holy Spirit. Now, is there anything wrong here ? No. The Maker of all has made no mistake ; nor may atheist or scoffer put his foot on that flower, and, to crush with its frail form our faith in providence, ask, "Where is now thy God ?" Ask that plant its history ! It speaks with a foreign accent ; and the truth comes out that God never made it to dwell here. An exile, man has torn it from its native home. It clings, like other exiles, to the habits and memories of its fatherland. It belongs to a region where the day is longest when ours is shortest, and men pant under summer heat when we are shivering in winter cold ; so the flowers that it spreads on our snowy ground but show how correctly God had wound it up to blow in its proper *habitat* at the proper season, and how clearly his providence may be discerned in the fading blossoms of a flower. I say again, if God takes such care of plants, how may you trust yourselves and your families to him ? What may you not trust to him, who spared nor pains, nor pity, nor care, nor kindness, nor even his beloved Son, but gave him up to death, that you might not perish, but live ?

3. Let me now select an illustration from the animal kingdom. Over the honeycomb, in which a vulgar taste, in common with the bear, finds only the means to gratify its appetite, the philosopher bends with admiration and amaze. He can have little reflection who has not marked the beauty and delicacy of those cells, which, though built in the darkness of the hive, and by a humble insect, man, with his reason and the aids of art, attempts in vain to imitate. Yet there is here something more wonderful than beauty. Examine them closely. See how each has the same number of sides with its fellow—being its exact counterpart. In that a child could discern plain evidence of design; but it displays also a depth of wisdom which only science can fathom. Repair to the study of a Newton, of one who tracks a wandering comet on its fiery path, or weighs not the Alps or Andes, but worlds in the scales of science, and ask him—for none else can solve the question—to find out for you the form of the vessel which combines the largest capacity with the greatest strength? Having wrought out this problem by a long series of abstruse calculations, he presents the result. How wonderful! You find it in the cell of a beehive!

I dare to call him a fool who ventures, in the face of such a fact, to deny a providence, or assert

that there is no God. Why, at a period in man's history when he was little better than a naked savage, when he was robbing the beast of his skin for clothing and of his rocky den for a home, when he had no tools but such as he fashioned from a stone, or vessels but of the rudest form and the coarsest clay, this insect was building the most beautiful fabrics from the most delicate materials with the skill of an accomplished architect, and according to the laws of a high philosophy. What a proof of an over-ruling providence! and that he, who teaches birds as well as angels to sing, guides the movements of the meanest creatures—presiding in a hive as well as in heaven! Why, then, should God's people ever despond? What can be too hard for them; too heavy for you to bear or too difficult for you to do? He, with whom all things are possible, is with you. And if, by the most feeble creatures, he achieves works of such skill and beauty, how may you take heart to believe, that by the aids of his holy Spirit, and the help of the grace promised to prayer, you shall “work out your salvation with fear and trembling; God working in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure?”

4. Let me show a divine providence in the most common circumstances of life. Most people are ready to acknowledge the hand of God in such

events as disease and death ; births and burials ; any remarkable escape from danger ; some either very favourable or unfavourable turn in their fortunes. Who has not noted down certain occurrences in his history as plainly indicating a providence ? Yet how many resemble the son rather than the father, of this story ? Father and son had parted in the morning, not to meet till nightfall. On meeting, the son said that he had been most wonderfully preserved ; his horse had thrown him, and but for God's good, guardian hand, he had certainly been killed. Whereupon his father replied that he had met with a yet more remarkable providence, and had still more cause to praise God ; for, he added, addressing the other, whose curiosity was wound up to the highest pitch in expectation of some strange and stirring story—I have travelled the livelong day, and been preserved from any alarm or accident whatever. Happy the man who thus sets the Lord always before him !

Now, for an example of providence in the most common things, let me select sleep—our nightly rest. “He giveth his beloved sleep,” “Thou holdest mine eyes waking,” so says the Bible ; and events occasionally place that truth very vividly before us. Do you remember a terrible shipwreck which occurred not many years ago on our west coast,

and how those who were saved number that perished, owed to the wakeful man? He was no watchman, no guard, no pilot on the look-out for ships, but an old, infirm seaman, bedded with the rest of the world. He slept; but, for no reason that he knew, his eyes were kept waking. Weary of tossing on a sleepless bed, he rose on the floor. With an old sailor's love of his cot, he drew aside the curtain of his cottage and looked out on the heaving deep. And what was it that was waking up the memory of his old eye, ere a landsman could have detected an object coming shoreward through the mist? Horror seizes him. Like a reckless ship on destruction, it is an ill-fated ship, driven by iron-bound coast, right into the jaws of death. Many were hurried that night into the sea, yet, but for the circumstance that he was on the old man's couch, but for the alarm given by the boats that were launched

Christ in Providence.

But, to take an example on a scale involving world-wide interests, I can shew, not the individuals only, but the existence of a nation since the Saviour sprang from that nation for the salvation of the world, turning on a sleepless night. Strange! yet true. The king of Persia, surrounded by many other kings, a mere puppet in the hands of unprincipled ministers—has signed a decree to exterminate the whole Jewish race. Conscious and uneasy for the deed, does not keep him from his bed when he retires to rest in Shushan's palace. His hand has planted no thorns in the royal couch; he cannot sleep; nor is there balm in silence, wine, or music, to make his weary eyelids close. Strange! he cannot sleep; and yet more strange, he has no choice of something to relieve the tediousness of the night. He calls for the chronicles of his kingdom. Dry reading, one would think; yet he knows the issue, and how the page turning up will relate the story of Mordecai's forgotten story.

the soft arms of pleasure, entertainment in the musty records of his kingdom? Did accident open the book where it recorded the story of Hebrew loyalty? No. God's own finger turned these leaves, and held the king's eyes waking. He had work for that king to do.

These events draw aside the veil, and let us see all the reins that guide and govern the world, gathered into the hands of God. We see Jesus standing by the helm of affairs; that there is no such thing as chance; that his care of his people extends to the most common, minute, and apparently trivial matters; how even waking hours, or dreamless slumbers, are solid links in the chain of providence. A happy belief; too precious to be parted with! Let the thought that Jesus watches over your fortunes, and guards your welfare, and guides your way, banish every care. I do not say that you shall never be disappointed; but certainly you ought never to be discontented. Many things in your circumstances may occasion anxious thought, but nothing should occasion, or can excuse, repining. Child of God! he has numbered the hairs of thy head, as well as the stars of heaven. Charge of angels! they shall keep thee in all thy ways—"They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

“By him all things consist;” and on raising our eyes to Jesus exalted, crowned, enthroned, with the government on his shoulder, two thoughts suggest themselves. First, our mind reverts, by way of contrast, to Jerusalem and Calvary, and that doleful day when he sank beneath the weight, and expired amid the agonies of his cross. If he, who now bears the weight of worlds, once staggered under the burden of our sins, oh! what an incalculable load of guilt must there be in sin? It bent the back that bears with ease the burden of ten thousand worlds. You cannot bear that load; and if you would not have it sink you into the deepest hell, flee to Calvary and leave it at the cross—Jesus invites the burden, saying, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Again, beholding Christ thus exalted to the right hand of God, we think of the security of his people. They are to watch and pray, and rejoice with trembling; still they cannot sink whom he holds up, nor lose the battle on whose side he fights. Believer, what hast thou to do to go groaning through the world, beneath a load of fears and cares? What should discourage thee?—disturb thy peace?—ruffle the calm spirit of a man who knows that the hands once nailed for him to the tree, hold the helm of his fortunes; and that

the blessed Saviour, who reigns within his heart, holds sovereign sway over earth and heaven ; and by both bitter and sweet providences, by coffins and cradles, by disappointments and joys, by losses and gains, shall "make all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

The Head.

He is the head of the body, the Church.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

AT a celebrated battle there was one position from which the enemy, though defeated in every other part of the field, kept up an unabated fire. It was held by a twenty-four pounder, which vomited forth galling and continuous discharges ; nor could our artillery, nor musketry, nor riflemen, silence it. That gun, said the commanding officer to the men of two regiments, must be taken by the bayonet. I must have it ; adding, as he placed himself at their head, No firing, and recollect that I am with you. There needed no more. They advanced ; and though the grape from the gun crashed through their ranks, the charge was irresistible.

The importance of a military position may be estimated by the determination with which it is assailed, on the one hand, and defended on the other. By this test I have discovered the key of

an old battle-field. Who were the combatants, and in what cause they fell, are matters about which history is silent; and even the traditions of the glen are dim and vague, like objects seen through its grey morning mists. The hoary *cairns* that stand scattered on the moor and rugged hill sides, plainly shew that war once raged over that quiet scene; and that, where the moorcock crows to the morning, and the plover rings out her wail, and lambs chase each other around these old grey stones, men once had trampled down the heather, staining it of a deeper crimson with their blood. One part of the field is distinguished from the rest by its close crowd of *cairns*: and there we know that the tides of battle met with direst shock, and human passions spent their wildest fury. These marks of hardest fighting and greatest carnage point out the key of the position—the most important post to be held, or won in that old field of battle.

According to this rule, we should conclude that the church of Christ has regarded the headship of her Lord as in some respects the very key of her position—one to be held to the death. For Christ's crown, for his sole right to rule his own house, and regulate, without Cæsar's interference, the affairs of his church, her largest, costliest, and most pain-

ful sacrifices have been made. And, as if there was an instinct of grace corresponding to that of nature which teaches an infant in the act of falling, by throwing out its hands and arms to save the head, even at the expense of its members, with a fidelity that has done her honour, the church has sacrificed her members, and lavishly shed her blood in support of Christ's headship. For this cause many, counting all things but loss, have suffered the spoiling of their goods ; have gone into banishment and exile ; have ascended the scaffold to lay their heads on the block, or, embracing the stake with a lover's ardour, have gone to heaven in a chariot of fire—to wear the martyr's crown, and learn how well Christ keeps his promise, Them that honour me I will honour.

Peter and John were the first publicly to maintain this doctrine. On parting with his disciples, our Lord commanded them to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; and when the Jewish rulers, attempting to infringe on Christian liberty, commanded them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, how prompt and decided was their reply ! “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

Nor less clear this reply of Peter's, on being charged a few days afterwards with having preached contrary to the injunctions of the civil magistrate, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Thus plainly did these men assert, and boldly maintain that Christ is head of his body, the church. They would have held it treason to own any other authority. So, taught by their example how to act in similar circumstances, ought we.

We have defects enough to clothe us with humility ; sins and shortcomings enough to teach us to ascribe the glory of any grace or honour we may possess, to him who maketh one to differ from another, and out of the mouth of babes ordaineth strength. We have nothing to be proud of. Yet, as patriots, we may be permitted to dwell with gratification and gratitude on the fact, that since the day when the apostles so boldly asserted Christ's sole right to reign in his church and to regulate its doctrines, discipline, and government, few countries have been more honoured to testify and suffer for that truth than ours. I do not refer only to recent events ; nor to the long and bloody struggles of the seventeenth century ; nor to the thorough part she played at the era of the Reformation. Her testimony to this doctrine dates much further back. Rude in arts and rough in

manners as our forefathers might be, they were the last of the nations to bow the neck to the yoke of Popery. Popish, like Pagan Rome, found them hard to conquer. And thus, when the lights of Iona were extinguished, and nothing was left of a faith comparatively pure but the lonely cells and ruined sanctuaries of Culdee worship, the dreary period of Popish darkness was shorter here than elsewhere—just as is the duration of night on those storm-beaten heights, which first catch the morning sun, and stand up glowing in golden light when the shades of evening have wrapped the valleys in gloom.

And after the era of the Reformation, who has not read, now through tears and now with burning indignation, what our heroic fathers suffered for Christ's crown? It was dearer to them than either their liberties or their lives. Handed down, like an heirloom, from martyred sire to son, this cause is interwoven with our whole national history. It runs through it like a silver thread. Running, I may say, in our very blood, we have imbibed it with our mother's milk. Far away from the smoke and din of cities, it is associated with wild glens, the dark moss hag, and those mountains where our fathers were hunted down like partridges; and pious peasants still regard with veneration

the moss-grey stone which, bearing the rude outlines of a Bible and a sword, shews that here a true man fell, and lies, a martyr for Christ's kingly crown, waiting the resurrection of the just. How much of undying interest does our city owe to the localities with which this cause is associated ! There rose the gallows on which the best and worthiest of the land were hung like caitiffs ; yonder, half-way between that castle and the palace, stood the gate above which their heads stood in ghastly rows, bleaching in the wind, and rain, and sun ; and here—the neighbourhood of this very church is sacred ground—this winding street, these low-browed windows, and the old quaint tenements that see us quietly gathering for Sabbath worship, were crowded two hundred years ago with the spectators of a different, if not a holier, certainly a more stirring, scene. “They come !” runs through the crowd, and turns all eyes on the advancing procession. And there, with slow but firm step, comes hoar old age, and noble manhood, and, most wept for by mothers and maidens, fair gentle youth—a band of candidates for martyrdom ; witnesses for Christ's royal rights ; heroes who held it noble for such a cause to die. In truth, our fathers set a higher value on Christ's headship than on their own heads ;

and for it alone not less than eighteen thousand were "faithful unto death." They have gone to their reward. Called, in one form or other, to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, may we follow them, even as they followed Christ!—remembering his words, "Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whosoever loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it."

A few years ago, as the world knows, we felt called on to revive our fathers' testimony, and shake the dust of two centuries from their time-worn banner. We had a cross to take up. Without knowing its weight, we took it up. And, while it becomes us to confess with sorrow before God and man, that human passions mingled "strange fire" with our service, and that, fighting sometimes for victory as much as for truth, dross adulterated the gold of our offering, we thought then, and think still, that ours was a call of duty, and a righteous cause. We were martyrs neither by desire, nor by mistake. But as I wish not to open old wounds, and would only dwell on those views of this doctrine which may edify the whole church

and promote mutual love, I will only say further, that I hope, and trust, and pray, that the more the churches are called to suffer for Christ's headship, they will hold it the more resolutely. Let them not fear. There are other things beside the oak which the tempests nurse into strength. The storms that strip the tree of some leaves, perhaps of some rotten branches, but moor it deeper in the rifts of the everlasting rock. And Christ's words cannot fail, "On this rock have I built my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

In now entering on the subject-matter of my text, I remark—

I. That Christ's body is his church.

All other bodies shall die, this is deathless—"Because I live," says our Lord, "ye shall live also." Paradox as it sounds, this body is ever changing, yet unchangeable: different and the same; an undying whole formed of dying parts. Strange! yet not more strange than many other things in nature. You are not the same material person, for example, who worshipped here twelve months ago; but, though in name, form, and features the same, in substance you are entirely

different. As Michael and Satan contended for the body of Moses, life and death have been contending for yours—death destroying its parts and life repairing them ; and thus the corporeal forms which we animate and inhabit, undergo such rapid and perpetual change, that a period much shorter than seven years renews our whole system. Life is just a long siege ; and, though death triumph in the end, looking at the many years over which the struggle is protracted, surely we are fearfully and wonderfully preserved, as well as fearfully and wonderfully made. Take another and more familiar illustration. Look at a river. The exile returns to the haunts of his early years, and there, emblem of the peace of God, the river flows as it flowed when he left its banks. Tumbling in snowy foam over the same rock, winding its snakelike way through the same verdant meadows, washing the feet of the same everlasting hills, it rushes through the glen with the impetuous passions of a perpetual youth, to pursue its course onward to the ocean. A grey old man, he seats himself on the bank where wild roses still shed their blossoms on a bed of thyme ; and the crystal pool at his feet, these waters foaming round the old grey stone, that bright dancing stream—these, as they touch his heart with memories of happy childhood and

companions dead and gone, seem the same. Yet they are not. The liquid atoms which compose the river have been undergoing perpetual change. Even so it is with the church of Christ. The stream of time bears on to eternity, and the stream of grace bears on to glory, successive generations, while the church herself, like a river fed by perennial fountains, remains—unchangeable in Christ's immutability ; immortal in his immortality.

These figures, however, fail in one important point. That river is one ; and the body is one. Unfortunately, the churches are many ; split into such numerous, and, in not a few instances, senseless divisions, that I know nothing better fitted to make a man recoil from the spirit of sectarianism than to see the long, wondrous, weary roll of the various sects that exist in Christendom. Fancy all these urging their claims on a newly-converted heathen ! What a Babel of tongues ! With what perplexity might he ask, amid so many contending factions, Which is the church and body of Christ ? Let us see :

Seven sons of Jesse come to Samuel's summons. Goodly men, they stand before him, candidates for the crown of Israel. But they cannot all be kings ; and which is to be the Lord's anointed ? One after another, the whole seven are rejected. Amazed at

the result, the prophet turns to their father, saying, "Are here all thy children?" and on being told, "There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep," he says, "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down till he come hither." A messenger goes. By and by feet are heard at the door ; it opens ; and, little dreaming of the honours that await him, David, who had left his harp, and pipe, and playful lambs, on the hills of Bethlehem, enters—modesty, manliness, and beauty blending in that countenance which was "goodly to look to." While the old man eyes the lad, as he stands reverently before him, a voice not caught by Jesse's ear, but heard by Samuel's, says, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Now, suppose that the different churches, like these sons of Jesse, stood before us. Whatever may be made of their claims, each cannot be Christ's true body ; since he has but one church, and, like the first Adam, is the husband of one wife. Of all these churches, then, each claiming to be cast in the true gospel mould—that with consecrated bishops, this with simple presbyters, this other without either ; that administering baptism to infants as well as adults, this only to adults ; that robed in a ritual of many forms, this thinking that religion, like beauty, when unadorned, is adorned

the most—which is Christ's body, the Lamb's wife? Which are we to honour as the favourite of heaven? Of which does God say, as of David among his rivals, Arise, anoint her, for this is she? Of none of them. Christ has a church, but it is none of these. In explanation of a remark which may surprise some, and is fitted to teach all of us humility and charity, I observe—

II. That Christ's body, which is not identical with any one church, is formed of all true believers, to whatever denomination they may belong.

It is natural for men to be partial to their own sect; nor do I quarrel with the feeling. Only we are to look kindly on others, and be ready to extend the hand of fellowship to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Mothers are prone to think their own children lovelier than their neighbours'; and nothing is more natural than that we should say of our own denomination, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." That is no breach of Christian charity; but to foster a spirit of sectarianism and so sin against Christ's spirit, is an offence as great as to sin against his truth. Bigotry is worse than heresy; and more

hateful in God's sight than error, is the haughty churchism or exclusive self-righteous pride which says to others, Stand by thyself; come not near me; "I am holier than thou."

"The king's daughter is *all* glorious within;" but where is the church which will stand that test?—the church that, among other points of resemblance to the ark, has not the unclean as well as clean with its walls; raven and dove; leopard and kid; the cruel lion with the gentle lamb? Are not events ever and anon occurring to remind us of the two birds Noah sent forth on a voyage of discovery? Like the snow-white dove returning to the ark, there are souls that can find no rest in sin or in the world, or anywhere from God—happy souls! But, alas, there are others, also tenants of the ark, like yonder, croaking, foul raven, which flaps his wings above corruption and riots on the carcases of the dead. Such characters as the last are found in the purest churches—spots on the sun, dead flies among the ointment; and it behoves us to see that we are not of their number. These are sad and solemn words, "Many are called, but few are chosen;" and, happier than Christ, or his servant Paul, that pastor must have a small and select flock whose members cost him no anxiety; neither the fears nor the tears of him who said, "Many walk,

of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

By these remarks I would not disparage outward ordinances and forms. They are valuable in their own place, and for their own purposes. They are frames for the picture ; caskets for truth's jewels ; dead poles, no doubt, yet useful to support living plants, and, when the bare stem is festooned with green leaves and crowned with a head of flowers, very beautiful. The church of Christ, however, is not to be identified with this, or that other form of government or worship. She embraces the good of all denominations ; and rejects the bad, from whatever hands they have received baptism and to whatever communion they belong—however pure their creed, or scriptural their form of worship. Since "the just shall live by faith," and by nothing else, he belongs to the true church who believes ; and he who believes not, to whatever church he belongs, has "neither part nor lot in this matter." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God help us to lay to heart that truth, and embrace the Saviour as he is offered in the gospel !

I have seldom heard this doctrine more pointedly expressed than by a poor woman who dwelt in one of the darkest quarters of our city. Away from her native home, and without one earthly friend, she had floated here, a stranger in a strange land, to sink into the most abject poverty ; her condition but one degree better than our Saviour's. In common with the fox, she had a hole to lay her head in. Yet, although poor and outwardly wretched, she was a child of God, one of the jewels which, if sought for, we should find in dust-heaps. With a bashfulness not unnatural, she had shrunk from exposing her poverty to the stare of well-robed congregations, resorting on Sabbath days to the well, beside which—appropriate place—a pious man was wont to stand and preach to ragged outcasts, crying in the name of Jesus, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. Supposing, in my ignorance of her habits, that she was living, like the mass around, careless of her soul, I began to warn her. Nor shall I soon forget how she interrupted me, and, drawing herself up with an air of injured dignity, said, “ Sir, I worship at the well; and am sure that if we are true believers in Jesus, and love him, and try to follow him, we shall never be asked at the judgment day, Where did you worship?” Well said,

and well shot, thou poor one ; that arrow hit the mark ! And as with her I admit nothing to be of vital importance but a genuine, heaven-born faith, let me ask, Are you true believers ? If so, blessed are you !—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered !" Are you unbelievers, impenitent, ungodly ? You may belong by profession to a church which holds the head, and has, in God's providence, been honoured to testify and suffer for the truth ; but what of that ? There is no safety in that. On the contrary, you appear only the more offensive to a holy God—as a spot looks worst on the face of beauty ; and Satan looked most hateful when he stood among the sons of God ; and skulls, as I have observed at funerals in the winter time, never look so grim, nor the churchyard mould so black, as when flung on a bank of snow. Trust not in your church, nor say, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Judgment shall begin at the house of God.

III. Christ's body, in a sense, embraces all those churches which hold the essential truths of the gospel.

It was the misfortune of Europe that Charles V. did not learn at an early period of his life the

lesson which he learned afterwards in a Spanish cloister. It had saved the world much bloodshed, him much treasure, and his soul much sin. After a vain attempt to quench the light of the Reformation, and make all men think alike, he resigned his crown and retired to a monastery. Wearied, perhaps, with mechanical devotions, he betook himself to the mechanical arts, as supplying something more congenial to his active mind. After long and repeated efforts to make two time-pieces go alike, he found that he could not; and on finding himself unable to make two machines, which had neither mind nor will, move in perfect harmony, it is said that he uttered this memorable reflection, What a fool was I to attempt to make all men think alike! Unfortunately for the peace of the church and for the interests of Christian charity, Charles the king has had more followers than Charles the philosopher.

There is a broad line of distinction between the essentials, and the circumstantialia of the faith. Yet as great attempts have been made at uniformity, as if uniformity were a law of God! On no such model has he constructed our world; for God, while he preserves unity, delights in variety. Nothing indeed is more foreign to nature than a dull, dreary, uninteresting uniformity. Look at

the trees of the forest ! With the same grand features, what variety in their forms!—some standing erect, wear a proud and lofty air ; some, modest-like, grow lowly and seek the shade ; some, like grief, hang the head and have weeping branches ; some, like aspiring and unscrupulous ambition, climb up by means of others, killing what they climb by ; and some, rising straight and tall, with branches all pointing upwards, present in their tapering forms emblems of the piety that spurns the ground and seeks the skies. Or look at the flowers—how many gay colours in a meadow ! Or look at mankind—what variety of expression in human faces, of tones in human voices ! There are no two faces alike ; two flowers alike ; two leaves alike ; two grains of sand alike ; but endless varieties, in which God manifests his resources, and Nature possesses one of her most attractive charms. And why insist on all men observing a uniform style of worship, or thinking alike on matters not essential to salvation ? It were as reasonable to insist on all men wearing the same expression of face, or speaking in the same tone of voice ; there being as great differences in the minds as in the bodies of men.

How tolerant was Paul of differences ? Forgetting how he bore with errors which would now-

a-days call down the excommunication of much inferior judges on their authors, men have insisted on uniformity in mere circumstantialia—rending the church of Christ and sowing the seeds of discord far and wide. Praying all the while for peace, they have made it such a melancholy spectacle as Jerusalem presented when, with the Roman without and famine within, different factions raged in the beleaguered city, and the Jews, fired by the most ferocious passions, plunged their swords into each other's bosoms.

His church has not followed her Lord's example. They were thieves and murderers of whom Christ cleared the temple; but, struck with frenzy and aiming at an impossible uniformity, his followers have driven their brethren out—Religion the while standing by to wring her hands, and, like Rachel, weep for her children, because they were not. No man, says the Bible, hateth his own flesh. What sane man consents to part with an arm, unless it is dead or incurably diseased?—but churches, possessed of a devil, or of the greatest folly, have cut off living members for no other offence than some small differences; some petty, trifling sore, which time or kindness would have healed. I do not deny that there have been justifiable separations. There must needs be offences; but it does

not follow that the woe pronounced on those by whom offences come falls on the party stigmatised as separatists. It is not they who leave, but they who, creating wrongs or refusing redress, compel men of tender conscience to leave a church, that are guilty, if there be schism in the matter, of its sin.

Divisions are bad things; yet I have no sympathy with those who, confounding charity with indifference, regard matters of religion as not worth disputing about. Such peace is worse than war. Give me the roaring storm rather than the stillness of the grave. Division is better than such union as the frost produces, when with cold and icy fingers it binds into one dead, congealed, heterogeneous mass, stones and straws, pearls and pebbles, gold and silver, iron and clay—substances that have nothing in common. Still, divisions are bad things; they give birth to bad passions; causing Ephraim to envy Judah, and Judah to vex Ephraim. Therefore, what we ought to aim at, is to heal them; and where we cannot heal them, to soften their asperities; bearing in mind these words, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”—“Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called the children of God.” If for conscience’ sake Christian men must part, why should they not part, saying with Abraham to Lot, Let there

be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we are brethren. Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me : if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right ; or, if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree ;” but it may not be the will of God that the church should ever present, in its collective character, the characteristic feature of that beautiful tree. The palm has a peculiar port ; rising tall and graceful in one straight stem without a single branch, up to the leafy plumes that wave above the desert sands and form its crown. Throwing out many goodly and fruitful boughs, the church, with its apparent variety but actual unity, rather resembles a giant oak which, with its roots in the rock and its head in the skies, throws out many branches to receive the gifts of heaven in blessed dews, and showers, and sunbeams. We hear much about the unity of the church ; but how often has it been turned to the interests of falsehood, and used as a spell, wherewith cunning priests have bound men to systems of gross error? Rightly understood, it is by no means incompatible with the existence of different denominations ; for what may they be but the branches of a tree which still is one—one in root, in stem, in sap, in flower, in

fruit. We have one faith, one spirit, and one baptism ; united in Christ, we meet in one centre ; and, like the radii of a circle, the nearer we approach Christ, our common centre, we shall be the nearer to each other. Let us recognise a common brotherhood, and love one another, even as Christ loved us ; and as members of the same family, travellers to the same home, called with the same holy calling, let us never forget the words of Joseph to his brethren, See that ye fall not out by the way.

But of all the symbols which set forth Christ's church, I prefer that in my text. Bringing out, as well as any other, our relationship to Christ, and, better than any other, our relationship to each other, it teaches us lessons of love, and charity, and tender sympathy. When bill-hook or pruning-knife lops a branch from the tree, the stem bleeds ; it seems for a while to drop some tears, but they are soon dried up ; and the other boughs suffer no pain, show no sympathy—their leaves dancing merrily in the wind over the poor dead branch that lies withering below. But a tender sympathy pervades the body and its members. Touch my finger roughly, and the whole body feels it ; wound this foot, and, thrilling through my frame, the pang shoots upward to the head ; let it, the heart, or even a tooth,

ache, and all the system suffers disorder. With what care is a diseased member touched ; what anxious efforts do we make to save a limb ; with what slow reluctance does a patient, after long months or years of suffering, consent to the last remedy, the surgeon's knife ? They are, therefore, holy lessons of love, charity, sympathy, Christ teaches by this figure. We have differences ; but these form no reason why we should not love each other ; give and forgive ; bear and forbear ; suffer and sympathise one with another, and agreeing to differ, walk together as far as we are agreed. These differences are like our own dark, cold, shadows, which, little at noon, grow larger as night approaches, assuming a gigantic size when the sun creeps along the horizon of a winter sky, or hangs low at his rise or setting. Sun of Righteousness ! rise higher and higher over us, till in thy light and love the church enjoys the full blaze of thy meridian beams, and these shadows all but vanish ! For this blessed end, God of love, pour out thy Spirit more affluently on the churches !—then shall the brethren dwell together in unity, and the world say, as it said in the days of old, See how these Christians love one another !

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The Head.

(Continued.)

He is the head of the body, the Church.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

GOD “is not the author of confusion”—so in the beginning, he established a harmony on earth as perfect as that of heaven. Nothing was out of tune; nor was there a jarring note in all creation. But how many and great discordances have the devil and sin introduced? Who can look abroad on the world and shut his eyes to the fact that much is out of order, out of joint; and that, to use a common saying, the right man is not always found in the right place? Sceptres fall from the grasp of great men into feeble hands—the sweat of labour stands on brows fit for a coronet or a crown—he ploughs the rugged soil, who has a hand to guide the helm of church or state—men sit in pews, who have piety and talents to adorn a pulpit—money flows in on those who, unlike the lake that gives as it gets, have no generous outgoings that correspond to their income—poverty,

though not the curse, is the cross of many a liberal soul—many in the world have the power to bless others, but are eaten up by their own wretched selfishness ; while others have the will to do good, but lack the power. So many things are out of tune and different from what they should be, and, but for sin, had been, that religion only can reconcile a man to the world ; and enable him to draw lessons of faith and patience from circumstances which exasperate the spirit of the ungodly. Yielding neither to envy nor to covetousness, a good man bows to the will of God. Using no violence to set wrong things right, he waits the advent of a better world ; having “learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content.”

Among other anomalies, we see the moral and physical properties of men often out of keeping. A kind, gentle, and loving heart lies under a rough exterior, reminding one of the milk and meat inside the cocoa-nut's dry, hard, husky shell. On the other hand, look at Absalom ! What grace of manners and beauty of person, how much in form and features to please the eye and minister to the pride of life, were united in him to the greatest moral baseness ! as if God intended to show us in how little esteem he holds what he threw away on such a man, and rebuke the silly vanity which,

worshipping at a mirror, feeds on charms that shall be the food of worms. Nor is his the only case where a fair form has lodged a foul heart, and treachery and murder have stained delicate hands.

Again, we often see that the mental does not correspond with the corporeal development. The finest genius has not seldom been enshrined in a crazy casket, or in a coarse one—like a pearl within its rough, black shell. Puny men have done mighty things; some have united the boldest daring with a contemptible presence; and that great emperor himself, who in our days aspired to be another Alexander, illustrated the poet's words—

“The mighty soul how small a body holds.”

On the other hand it was, in some respects, a weak head that stood on the broad shoulders of Samson—a woman conquering him whom the Philistines could not subdue, and binding with her charms whom they could not bind with their chains. In vain, God says, the net is spread in the sight of any bird; yet see how Samson walks straight in; snared by a cunning transparent to all eyes but his. Enslaved by animal passions, asleep in Delilah's lap, a captive of the Philistines, there he lies like a great lion in the hunter's net; reminding us, by way of contrast, of the words, “Wisdom is better

than strength ; wisdom is better than weapons of war."

An example also of discordancy, but shewing a mind that towered aloft over matter, what a noble contrast does Paul present to Samson ! There is nothing to attract the gazer's eye in him who, according to ancient tradition, was a poor, puny, mean-looking figure. His presence, said his enemies, is weak, and his speech contemptible. But put his parchments before him and a pen in his hand, and, higher than the bird flew from whose wing it dropped, he soars away into a heaven of thought ; or, coming down with an eagle's swoop, descends deeper than any man, before or since, into the depths of gospel mysteries. Or, give him liberty of speech ; place him on Mars' Hill to expound the faith, or let him stand, like a lion at bay, on his defence at the bar of kings—and indifference gives place to interest ; contempt changes into admiration ; the audience is hushed ; and, amid breathless silence, he sways the multitude with a master's hand, and his puny form seems to rise to a giant's stature. He seizes error, and rends it as Samson rent the lion ; he lays his arms on the pillars of Time's oldest and most colossal superstitions, to shake the hoary fabric, and pull it into the dust—burying gods and goddesses in one common ruin.

The casket affords no test by which to estimate the value of the jewel ; the boards and binding of a book suggest no idea of the thoughts that lie sparkling, like stars, in its pages ; so, in this discordant world, you cannot judge the inner by the outer man, the soul by the body which it animates. That observation applies to the most sacred things. The church of Christ herself presenting the greatest anomalies ; and it would do our Lord the greatest injustice, if, overlooking that fact, we were to judge the head by its body, and argue what Christ must be from what Christians are.

Neither, in the first place, in our own, nor in any other church, do we see the real body of which Jesus Christ is the head. Its members consist of all true believers, dispersed over the wide lands of Christendom. Then, what are the best churches, at the best, but gold mines ? Some may be, and certainly are, richer than others in the precious metal ; yet all have dross and rubbish. Nor, to continue the figure, shall the true church become visible, and appear as a distinct and separate body, till the gold, gathered from a hundred mines, and purified by a Spirit of fire, and presenting to the Refiner a perfect image of himself, is run into a common mould. Besides, while the materials are

widely scattered, and much of the ore yet lies buried in the mine, none of them are pure ; none perfect. Who can say that he has no sin ?—there is no man that sinneth not ; nor any, though he has come in contact with the finest specimens of piety, and been happy enough to breathe the holiest atmosphere, but is ready with the wise man to say, I have seen an end of all perfection.

To change the figure, the materials of the heavenly temple are now under the hammer, and by hard strokes of fortune and rough providences, as well as by the ordinary means of grace, God is preparing these living stones for the hand of death, and a temple where no sound of hammer is heard. The church is in process of building. And no more than any other builder, is Christ to be judged by his work, till he has brought it to a close. Then, when from the most excellent majesty, the voice once heard on the cross cries, “It is finished,” when he brings forth the headstone thereof with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it,” when the scaffolding of ordinances is removed, and the heavens which concealed it are rolled up like a curtain, how shall that temple, of such just proportions and surpassing splendour, stand forth the admiration of the universe—its greatest wonder, and God’s brightest glory ! Then, to take up the me-

taphor of my text, the body will be worthy of the head, as the head is the glory of the body.

I. As Head of his church, our Lord Jesus Christ is the life of its members.

You do not need to be anatomists to know that, as the head is the highest, it is the noblest and most important part of our frame. Seat of the senses and shrine of the soul, it is more than any other part connected with life and its various functions ; all the other organs drawing their energies from this great source and centre of vital power. Paralyse the nerves which connect them with the brain, as the wires of the telegraph do the different stations with the electric battery, and their powers are gone—their functions cease ; the eye loses its sight, the ear its hearing, the lips their speech ; the tongue tastes no sweetness in honey nor bitterness in wormwood ; the strong arm of labour hangs helpless by the side ; nor is there power left to lift a foot, though it were to save life. The whole machinery of this wonderful frame stops, like a mill when you shift the sluices, and turn the water off its plashing wheel. So intimately connected, indeed, are the head and the body, that one cannot exist without the other. For though Nature, in

her freaks, produces strange monsters, which, though deficient, some of this and some of that part, contrive to live, and though the body can survive the most formidable lesions, yet the loss of the head is the loss of life. Death descends on the knife of the guillotine. A bullet whistles through the parting air, the lightning flashes, the sword of the headsman gleams in the sun, and—there is a corpse ! before the eye has winked, the man is dead ; stone dead.

In illustrating the doctrine and figure of my text, this leads me to remark that—

1. As head of his church, Jesus Christ, by means of the connection which grace establishes between him and the believer, maintains our spiritual life. Without me, he says, ye can do nothing. As all our wishes, words, and works, however expressed in looks and sounds and bodily movements, are born in the brain, there is not a good wish formed, or good word spoken, or good work done, but Christ is its fountain-head. Separated from him, a believer were no better than an eye plucked from its socket ; a cold, dead, hand severed from the bleeding arm.

Suppose this connection were dissolved, what a deadly paralysis would seize the soul ! Few sights are more pitiful than a man of robust

strength, eloquent lips, eagle eye, majestic port, and stalwart step, suddenly turned by a stroke of paralysis into a poor, stammering, tottering, impotent object ; yet he is only a feeble image of what we should be, were the communications of the Spirit suspended. Deprived of the strength I draw from Christ, I could not stand a buffet from Satan's hand ; or as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, fight the fight of faith, and be able to endure hardness. Strong as the hand of faith had been, it would now shake like an aspen ; and, but the sad wreck of other days, gone were my power to sing the praises of God, and walk or run in the way of his commandments. And this impotency, whether it spread over the soul like a creeping palsy, or came with the suddenness of a stroke, were the dismal prelude of eternal death.

I have supposed, for illustration's sake, that the connection were dissolved ; but, blessed be God ! that cannot be—"They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. With such an assurance from Jesus' lips, how may we say—Thou hast set my feet upon a rock?—and standing on its summit, above the surging waves of doubt and fear, what

hinders us to add with Paul, I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is through Jesus?

2. As head of his church, Jesus Christ is the source of our spiritual life. We must not confound the means of life with its first cause. The chamber in Shunam, where a pious woman had lodged "the man of God," illustrates what even we may do in communicating life to a soul, dead in sin. Let us in fancy open the door, and, with feelings of awe and wonder, enter the room. The mother left below, Elisha is alone with the body of the dead boy; his mother had laid him in the prophet's chamber, and on the prophet's bed, as if, like the drowning who will catch a passing straw, she had thought that there might be something not only sacred, but life-restoring about the very walls which had been hallowed by the good man's prayers. Elisha gazes fixedly and fondly on the pale, placid countenance; and having waked up his tenderest affections for the dead creature he had often carried in his arms and kissed and blessed, he turns from the lifeless clay to the living God. He kneels beside the dead; he prays for the

dead ; and in supplications a mother may hear, as, with beating heart, she sits silent, listening and hoping, he pours out his soul. The prayer ceases. It has been heard. The prophet knows it ; and now rises to use other means, nor doubts of their success. As one who, seeking another's conversion, brings the truth in himself into kind and closest contact with that other's soul, Elisha brings his own life as close as possible to the dead. Love revolting at nothing, he takes the corpse into his arms ; he stretches himself upon the body ; he puts his mouth on the boy's mouth, and his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. The living heart of the prophet beats against the dead heart of the child—knocks there to waken it ; he pleading all the time, and entreating God with tears that hang on the lashes of those closed eyes and bedew the face of death. We know not how long the dead lay in this living embrace ; but pains and prayer had their reward. A step is on the floor. The mother hears it, and starts to her feet. The door opens. "Gehazi !" cries the prophet—a summons rapidly followed by the order, "Call the Shunammite !" Hope sounds in that voice ; joy leaps in her heart ; she hastens up, and rushes in. He points her to the smiling boy, saying, Take up thy son !—as with delirious joy and open arms she

bounds across the floor to lock him in a long, fond embrace.

Thus, as a medium or link to connect the living with the dead, a believer may be the means of communicating life. But, observe that the life which Christ gave you, was his own : “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” What Elisha could not do in that chamber for the child, our Saviour did for us on the cross. He died that we might live—emptying his own veins to fill ours with blood ; and stretching himself out on this cold dead world, to expire in giving it life. Thus is “Christ our life.” Besides, if any vital, heavenly fire burns in you, it was Christ who kindled it ; for the spirit life came not, like the natural, through father and mother—flashing, as an electric spark, from the first man along the links of successive generations. It was “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ;” but came with the kiss Christ impressed on death’s icy lips, just as Adam got life when, stooping over the clay, God breathed into its nostrils the breath of life. And as Christ by his death purchased our life, by his life he now maintains it ; and as the life of a mother is that of the babe in her

womb, his life is ours. The connection between these is such that she might address her unborn, saying, Because I live, thou livest also ; but Jesus says more, saying, Because I live, ye *shall* live also. The mother may die. Hope's withered wreath has been cast on a grave where mother and child, the rose and its bud lie buried together ; and, confining the babe in a mother's womb, death, by one stroke, has inflicted a double blow on some childless, widowed man. But one in life with Christ, believers can never die. Never : for he dieth no more—that head bows on a cross, that eye darkens in death, that brow, crowned with glory, bleeds under thorns no more ; “I am he that liveth and was dead.”

Thus, revived through Christ, and through our union with him safe from the second death, believers can dare, in a sense, to use his own great words, saying, “I am he that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” So long as he lives, you live ; as he shall live, you shall live. Why then should you dread the grisly king ; or fear the shaking of his dart ? You are deathless men. Hear the voice of your Saviour ; “I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish”—“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Disease may rot off a

limb ; an empty sleeve, pinned to a breast glittering with stars and medals, may tell of losses suffered, as well as battles fought in a country's cause ; and accident may any day tear a member from our body, and separate it from its living head. But no accident, no chance, no, nor all the devils of hell, shall separate us from the love of Christ. I cling to that belief. Without it, where were the peace of the saints ; or that most precious promise, "I will never leave you, let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

II. As Head of his church, Jesus Christ rules its members.

It is not pain that makes the insect go spinning round and round, to the amusement of the thoughtless, not cruel, boy who has beheaded it. It has lost in the head that which preserves harmony among the members ; and controlling their movements, prevents such anarchy in the body corporeal as there was in the body politic, when "there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes." Seated, as becomes a king, in the highest place, the head gives law to all beneath it. The tongue speaks or is silent, the arms rise or fall, the feet walk or rest, the eye

opens or shuts, as this sovereign wills ; and, transmitting its orders along the nerves which reach the most distant members by their ramifications, it receives instant, implicit obedience from all. It rules more despotically than any sovereign—mutiny unknown among its subjects, they hatch no plots, and form no conspiracies.

Patterns of the obedience we should yield to Jesus, the members obey the head, even to their own loss and painful suffering. Take an example. Archbishop Cranmer stands chained to the stake. The fagots are lighted. With forked tongues the flames rise through the smoke, which opens, as the wind blows it aside, to show that great, old man standing firm in the fiery trial. Like a true penitent, he resolves that the hand which had signed his recantation shall burn first ; it obeys, and bravely abides the flame. In obedience, to the head, the hand lays itself down to suffer amputation ; or flings away the napkin for the gallows' drop to fall ; or signs the bond that, as was foreseen by some of our fathers when they attached their names to the League and Covenant, seals their fate, and dooms them to a martyr's grave. Let the head forgive, and the hand opens to grasp an enemy's, in pledge of quarrel buried and estrangement gone. Would to God that Christ had

such authority over us! Make us, O Lord, thy willing subjects in the day of thy power! Prince of Peace, ascend the throne of our hearts, and take unto thee thy great power, and reign!

How happy, how holy should we be, were our hearts, minds, and bodies, as obedient to the laws of his word and influences of his Spirit, as my hand and tongue are to my head. Brethren, what else but this is needed, not only to preserve purity and peace in our souls, but to restore them to distracted churches? My body knows and owns no authority whatever but its own head; and why should Christ's church do otherwise? How many divisions were healed, would she repudiate all government but his, in things belonging to his kingdom; would she take his word as her only rule, and read it with the faith of a little child; would she call none master but Jesus, nor admit any authority over conscience but the law and the testimony; would she throw down all sectarian walls and barriers, and make nothing necessary to church communion but what is necessary to being a Christian?

There is no essential difference between the Evangelical denominations. And what should hinder them from being as ready to love and help, each other, as my foot is to run in the service of my hand, and my hand is to work for the benefit

of my foot, and my eyes and ears, standing on their high tower of observation, are to watch for the good of the body and all its members? With such sympathy among the brethren, how soon would harmony reign in Jerusalem! What triumphs would crown her arms; what prosperity bless her palaces! The sin, the shame, the scandal, the monstrous and afflicting spectacle of Christian churches in arms against each other, and stunning the ears of a scoffing world with the din of battle, would cease; for ever cease. The fields of war present horrid spectacles of men shearing off each other's limbs, and plunging their swords into each other's breasts, but who ever saw a case so monstrous, as a man's hands and feet and other members declaring war against each other? Yet such a sight the church has often presented. The most wretched reasons have been considered sufficient for separation; or for remaining separate. Paltry differences have given rise to quarrels, and quarrels have given rise to blows, and blows have ended in running sores and bitter hatreds, until a bleeding church has been left, when asked about her wounds, to complain, "These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Oh, that all our unhappy and often unholy contentions would cease! How long, O Lord, how

long? Come, Holy Dove, and sweep these storms away with thy snow-white wing, bringing an olive branch from the trees that grow by the river of life! Yet vain meanwhile the wish! Never shall the ark rest, nor peace brood, like a halcyon bird, on the troubled waters, till Christ receives the honour which is his due; till the Head in heaven rules the body on earth; till the names of fathers, both ancient and modern, are discarded, and no authority but Christ's is acknowledged by the church which he has bought with his precious blood, and whose members, loved so dearly by him, ought as kindly and dearly to love one another. "Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

III. As Head of his church, Jesus Christ sympathises with its members.

All the rivers, says Solomon, run into the sea; and a dissection of the body shows that all the nerves run into the brain. The head is the centre of the nervous system. Beneath that palatial dome the soul dwells; and by the nerves which run out from that centre she corresponds with matter; looking through the eyes, feeling by the hand, hearing by the ears, speaking by the tongue—unless when she seizes the hours of sleep to rest

herself, or roam away in dreams. The nerves form a perfect system of living telegraphs. By their means the soul knows instantly what passes in all parts of her realm, and takes immediate measures for the well-being of every member of the body. Let the foot but touch a thorn, it is instantly withdrawn. And how? Pain, thrilling along the nerves, flashes the danger upward to the head; the head, by another set of nerves, sends back an immediate order, and thus, ere the thorn is buried in the flesh, the foot is withdrawn. Or, let but the wing of a gnat brush, or a mote of dust touch the guardian fringes, and the eyelid drops, like portcullis at a castle gate, to keep out the foe. Thus the head sympathises with all the body; and, sympathising, succours it.

Such is the sympathy between Christ and his people. Be it known to you that he is in constant, closest communication with all his members; and by lines that stretch along the starry sky from earth to heaven, a believer's meanest cottage is joined to the throne of God. No accident stops that telegraph. The lines of providence radiate out from, and the lines of prayer radiate into, the throne of God. Thus Christ, touched with a fellow-feeling for your infirmities, suffers all your wrongs, hears all your prayers, and supplies all

your needs. You can never apply to him too often, nor ask of him too much. To his ear the needy's prayers are sweeter music than the voice of angels, or the harps of heaven.

In a distant land, how sadly the poor invalid thinks of home ; and wishes he could annihilate the seas that roll between him and his mother, removing his sick-bed from her kind attentions. A stranger in a strange land, the bitter tears rise the faster in his eye as busy fancy flies away, and the home of his boyhood stands before him, and the cool breeze wafting odours from the garden flowers kisses his cheek, and he passes under the shadow of the old trees, and, entering the well-known door, he hears his sister's song, and a father's merry laugh, and a mother's sweet, soft, loving voice, and sees those that would hasten to his help, and hang over his bed, and smooth his restless pillow, and wipe the death-sweat from his brow, gathered, a bright and happy circle, by a fireside he shall never more see.

It is sweet to feel that any one cares for us ; sweetest in suffering's hour to have those near who love us, with their kind looks, and voices and offices of untiring affection. But human sympathy is liable to a thousand interruptions ; and there are sorrows which we hide from others, with which,

not a stranger, but a bosom friend may not intermeddle. But, blessed Jesus ! there is no sorrow thy people hide from thee, nor any pang thy members feel but is felt by thee. Thanks be to God that, selecting from our frame its most sensitive and tender part, he has set forth this in an image which all can appreciate ; “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

If, to words that so beautifully and fully set forth the tender sympathy which Christ cherishes for his people, I could venture to add any that ever fell from mortal lips, I would select those of Margaret Wilson, Scotland’s maiden martyr. Some two hundred years ago, there was a dark period of suffering in this land, when deeds of bloody cruelty, not outdone by Indian butcheries, were committed on God’s people. One day the tide is flowing in the Solway Firth ; rushing, like a race-horse, with snowy main to the shore. The beach is occupied by groups of weeping spectators, who keep their eyes fixed on two objects out upon the wet sands. There, two women, each tied fast by their arms and limbs to a stake, stand within the sea-mark ; and many earnest prayers go up to heaven that Christ, who bends from his throne to the sight, would help them now, in their dreadful hour of need. The elder of the two is staked farthest out.

Margaret, the younger martyr, stands bound, a fair sacrifice, near by the shore. Well, on the billows come, hissing to their naked feet ; on and further on they come—death riding on the top of the waves, and eyed by these tender ones with unflinching courage. The waters rise, and rise, till, amid a scream and cry of horror from the shore, the lessening form of her that had death first to face, is lost in the surging wave. It recedes, but only to return ; and now, the sufferer gasping for breath, her death struggle is begun ; and now, for Margaret's trial and her noble answer. "What see you yonder?" said their murderers, as, while the water rose cold on her own limbs, they pointed her attention to her fellow-confessor in the suffocating agonies of death. Response full of the boldest faith, and brightest hope, and all the divine, unfathomed consolation of my text, she replied, "I see Christ suffering in one of his own members." Brave and glorious words ! borrowed from my text, and leading us to the apostle's most comforting and most sublime conclusion, "We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

The Beginning.

Who is the beginning.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

THERE are certain points where the different kingdoms of Nature approach and interlace each other. Each in turn passes the boundary into the other's domain, as the land and the sea do—here, in the headland that stands so boldly out among the boiling waves, there, in the beautiful bay that lies locked in the arms of the land.

In our conservatories, for instance, you see flowers which present a curious, and very surprising resemblance to some insects. Their leaves have so much of the form and colour of wings, that the flowers themselves seem gorgeous butterflies, suspended in the air, and hovering over the plant, as you have seen an insect ere it alighted to suck the juices of a flower. The animal world, also, is furnished with things as strange ; presenting, if I may say so, a corresponding play and display of divine power. If there are flowers which resemble

insects, there are insects so like leaves—fresh and green, or sere and yellow, that the deception is complete ; and the mistake is not discovered, till, putting out your hand to pluck the leaf, you stand amazed—instantly, as by magic, it changes into a living creature, and, taking wing, flies off. These things are more than curious. In them a thoughtful eye sees not only the skill and power, but the goodness of him, who, in that strange livery, so masks a helpless creature, that it deceives its enemies and is safe from their attacks. What force do the exquisite devices and almighty power, which are put forth to shield the meanest insect, give to the exhortation, “Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

But the kingdoms of nature touch at points still more real and palpable. They are so shaded off into each other, that some of the animals on their borders present a combination of properties puzzling to philosophers ; and to the multitude, an inexplicable wonder. The power of flying belongs to birds, and that of walking to quadrupeds ; yet there are birds, as the ostrich, that never fly, and four-footed animals, as the bat, that never walk. It is the characteristic of land animals to breathe by lungs, and of fishes to breathe by gills ; yet there are inhabitants of the sea, as the whale,

which breathe like creatures of the shore, and, on the other hand, in dry and dusty walls, and beneath the stones of the moorland, there crawl creatures whose breathing organs are those of fishes. Sensibility characterises animals, and insensibility plants ; but there are plants with leaves so sensitive that they shrink from the slightest touch—shutting, like an eyelid, if they be rudely blown on ; while, there are animals which you may turn inside out, like the finger of a glove—and the rudeness gives them no pain ; certainly neither destroys their life, nor deranges their functions. Deprived of light, plants pale and sicken, droop and die ; and so dependent is animal life on a due supply of light, that Dr. Kane imputes the madness which seized his dogs to the darkness of that polar night which lasted for a hundred and forty days. Yet, so independent are some creatures of light, that in the Kentucky caves, which none have been yet so bold as fully to explore, amid a gloom like the grave, and on the banks of a river which, rushing through their darkness, fills them with the roar of its cataract, and goes, like a being whose fate is lost in mystery, no man knows where—strange, eyeless animals roam ; and have their loves ; and, not overlooked by God down there, no doubt enjoy life—though emblem of the condition of the lost, it is

passed in utter and perpetual night. How marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!

In consequence of certain plants and animals being endowed with properties which characterise the classes next in order to themselves, there is a beautiful gradation in nature. It presents no wide gap; no abrupt, and sudden change. The whole fabric of creation rises upwards, like a lofty pyramid, with its different courses dovetailed the one into the other; and so constructed, that by a series of steps you ascend from the lowest forms of existence up to man—standing on its apex, with his feet resting on earth, and his head touching the stars. And what combinations are so strange as those which meet in man? In some respects how noble, in others how mean he is; an animal in his corporeal, and an angel in his spiritual elements; the slave of passions that grovel in the dust, yet endowed with powers that hold converse with God; since his banishment from Eden, his life a mystery, and himself, as an old writer says, half a devil and half a beast—a being at the best, symbolised, after a sort, by those cherubim which joined an animal's form to the wings of an angel, and the face of a man.

Great is the mystery of godliness! the most precious, being the greatest of all mysteries. For where else is there such a combination of what

appear irreconcilable properties ; such harmonising of what seems discordant ; such blending of the peculiar characteristics of distinct and different orders ? In his person, character, and work, Jesus Christ presents what is explicable, and, to my mind, credible, on no theory but one—that he was God manifest in the flesh ; Emmanuel, God with us. Indeed, I should find it as easy to deny the divinity of the Bible, as, having admitted that, to reject the divinity of Christ. To illustrate this conjunction of apparently conflicting elements :

1. Look at our Lord by the grave of Lazarus. How truly man, partaker of our common nature ! The sight of the tomb wakens all his grief ; the sufferings of these sisters, clinging to each other, touch his loving heart ; and he stands there, sanctioning human sorrow, and even exalting it into a manly, most noble thing. With eyes that swim in tears, and groans that rend his breast, he is so deeply, uncontrollably, visibly affected, that the spectators exclaim, See how he loved him ! Jesus wept. So he did some moments ago ; but now, what a change. The crowd retreat—surprise, wonder, and terror in every face ; the boldest recoiling from that awful form which comes shuffling out of the grave. This man of tears, so gentle and so tender, that he often wept, possessed of a sensibility

so delicate that the strings of his heart vibrated to the slightest touch, has rent the tomb. Struck with terror, the witch of Endor shrieked when she saw Samuel emerging from the ground ; what a contrast this scene to that ! Not in the least surprised at the event, as if, in raising the buried, he had done nothing more than light a lamp or rekindle the cold embers of a fire, calm and tranquil, Jesus points to Lazarus, saying, Loose him, and let him go.

2. Look at Jesus by Jacob's well. There a woman who has come to draw water about mid-day, finds a traveller resting himself. She looks at him. He is brown with the dust of a journey ; he looks pale, and worn, and weary ; the hot sun beats upon his head. She looks at him : and he accosts her, saying, Give me to drink ! Granting his request—for woman seldom refuses kindness to the needy—she fancies, no doubt, this to be some poor Jew, who, in asking a favour from a Samaritan, makes his pride bend to necessity. So he seemed, when, gratefully acknowledging her kindness, he bent his head, and drank. But, when he raises his eyes to look, not into her face, but into her heart, and read off, as from a book, its most secret thoughts, and, to tell her, although they had never met before, all “that she had ever done,” how great

is her wonder? She is amazed and awed. Well she might. The thirsty, weary, way-worn man has suddenly changed into the omniscient God.

Thus, the incommunicable attributes of Divinity, and the common properties of humanity, stand clearly out in our Lord's life and person. And a conjunction of things apparently as irreconcilable, presents itself in the description of Jesus in this verse. In this clause, he is described by a term sacred to God ; and passing on to the next clause, we step at once from the throne of the heavens into a grave. In these words, "the beginning," we behold him presiding at the creation of the universe ; by those which follow, "the first-born from the dead," we are carried in fancy to a lonely garden, where Roman sentinels keep watch by his tomb ; or where, as they fly terror-stricken from the scene, we see him who had been clothed with light as with a garment, putting off a shroud, and coming out of a tomb. What key is there to this mystery, or possible way of harmonising these things, but this, that Christ was more than man ; one who has brought together properties so wide apart as dust and divinity, time and eternity, eternal God-head and mortal manhood? How much comfort to us, and glory to him, in this mysterious union ! Should it not dissipate every care,

to think that our Saviour and friend has the heart of a brother, and the hand of God?

Let us now consider that clause of this verse in which our Lord is called "the beginning."

I. This term expresses his divine nature.

I have read a story of a blind man, who, resolved to rise above his misfortune and pursue knowledge under the greatest difficulties, set himself to study the nature of light, and of colours. This much he had learned, that, while these differ in intensity, it is the red ray that glares strongest on the eye. He flattered himself that he had now mastered a subject which must remain for ever, more or less, a mystery to the blind; and so, on being asked what red was like, he replied—satisfaction at his acquirements lighting up his sightless face—that it was like the sound of a trumpet. We may smile at an answer so wide of the mark, yet his difficulty in describing colours is more or less ours in describing God. It were easier for these fingers to enclose the world, for this hand to grasp the globe, than for a finite mind to comprehend the infinite fulness of God. As Scripture says, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it"—"He stretched out the north over the empty place, and

hath the earth upon nothing. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent, Lo, these are part of his ways ; but how little a portion is heard of him ? but the thunder of his power who can understand ?”

As that blind man borrowed terms from sounds to express the objects of sight, and therefore did it very imperfectly, so, familiar only with the visible, palpable, finite, we have to borrow terms from these things to describe the invisible ; Him who is encased in no body, and confined within no bounds. And as I have seen a father, to make a thing plain to the boy on his knee, drop all correct and philosophical language, and speak to the child after the manner of a child, so our heavenly Father speaks of himself to us. Did he make the heavens and the earth ?—they are the work of his hands. Does he rule the storm ?—he holds the winds in his fist. Are the earthquake and volcano obedient to his will ?—like guilt in presence of its judge, the earth trembles at his look, and at his touch the mountains smoke. Does he constantly watch over his people ?—as a mother’s eye, whatever be her task, follows the movements of her infant, so that if it fall she may raise it, or if it wander too near the fire, the cliff, or the stream, she may run to pluck it out of danger, God’s eyes run to and fro through-

out the whole earth, to shew himself strong to them whose hearts are perfect towards him. Does it thunder?—it is the voice of the Lord; the lightning cloud that comes driving up the sky is his chariot; and when flash blazes upon flash, his arrows go abroad. His presence is now an eye; now a hand; now an arm; now a shield. His love is a smile; his anger a frown. Are his mercies withdrawn?—he repents. Are they restored?—he returns. Does he interpose in any remarkable way?—he plucks his hand from his bosom, and, like one who goes stoutly to work—the blacksmith who wields the hammer or the woodman who plies the axe—he makes bare his arm. And when inspiration, attempting one of her loftiest flights, seeks to express the greatness of his majesty, she turns the heavens into a sapphire and star bespangled throne, and taking up this great globe, rolls it forward for God to set his feet on; “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” Thus, by terms borrowed from our bodies, and properties, and circumstances, God describes himself; and among other instances employs in one case the very term applied to Jesus in my text. To teach us that he is before all, both the cause and the end of all, he takes the Greek alphabet; and, selecting the first and last letters,

as those within which all the rest stand, he says, "I am Alpha and Omega, *the beginning* and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

He must be God who is almighty. He must be God who is, and was, and is to come ; and since "the beginning" is another title applied in that passage to God, by applying it to our Lord, Paul pronounces him divine, and around the head which was once pillowed on a woman's bosom, and bowed in death on a cross, he throws a halo of uncreated glory. A man worshipped in heaven ; a babe adored on earth ; the infant's advent sung by angels ; sable night throwing off her gloom, and breaking into splendour above his manger ; one whom many well remembered as if but yesterday carried in Mary's arms, or playing with the boys of Nazareth, claiming to be older than Abraham ; his step on the water lighter than a shadow's, his voice in the storm mighty as God's ; the prompt obedience of unruly elements ; the sullen submission of reluctant devils, as they retired back, and further back, before that single man, like broken rebels before a loyal and superior force ; the hand that was nailed to the cross bestowing crowns of glory, and opening heaven to a dying thief ; the earth trembling with horror, and the sun clothed in mourning ;

the admiration of the great apostle, who found heaven too low, and hell too shallow, and space too short, to illustrate the love which gave the Saviour for us ;—these have no other key but “the mystery of godliness ;” Jesus Christ “God manifest in the flesh.” What a precious truth ! The blood of Calvary being, as Paul calls it, “the blood of God,” may well have virtue in it to cleanse from sin—though our sins be as scarlet, to make them white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, to make them as wool.

II. This term, “the beginning,” expresses Christ’s relation to his church and people.

The beginning of a tree is the seed it springs from. The oak had its origin in the acorn. From that dry, hard shell, sprung the giant growth that laughed at storms ; in the course of time covered broad acres with its ample shade ; and built the ship that, with wings spread to the wind, flies under a Bethel flag to bear the gospel to heathen lands, or, opening her ports, rushes on the slave-ship, and fights the battle of humanity on the deep. Now, as a seed, Jesus Christ was one of little promise. According to the prophet, he was, in the eyes of men, a root out of a dry ground. In his

lifetime he was despised, and in his death rejected of men ; yet out of him has grown that church which shall bear the blessings of salvation to the ends of the earth, and pursue her bloodless victories, till continents and islands have knelt at his feet. All the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Christ.

A house, again, begins at the foundation. The foundation-stone may be sunk in a deep, dark hole ; where, though there unseen and forgotten, it supports the weight of the superincumbent structure. And when the nails were drawn, and the lifeless body of our Lord was lowered from the cross, and received into women's arms, and borne without funeral pomp by a few mourners to the tomb, and laid, amid sobs and groans and flowing tears and bitter griefs, in that dark sepulchre, then did God in heaven say, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." Yes, it was a tried stone—men and devils, and his Father too ; hunger, and thirst, suffering, and death, all had tried him. Since then, in great temptations, and sore afflictions, and fierce assaults of the Evil One, the foundation has been tried ; winds have blown, and rains fallen, and rivers swelled, and floods rolled, but never moved the man who believed in Christ, and the hopes that

rested on his finished work. Saints conquering temptation, martyrs singing in prison, believers dying in peace, devils baffled, hell defeated, have made good Christ's lordly and lofty words, "Upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Jesus, its founder, began his church ere the world was made, or sun or stars shone in heaven—providing for the fall before the event. He had the life-boat on the beach before the bark was stranded, or launched, or even built. Not eighteen hundred years ago, when the cross rose with its bleeding victim high above the heads of a crowd on Calvary ; not the hour of the Fall, when God descended into the garden to comfort our parents, and crush the hopes of the serpent ; but eternal ages antecedent to these events saw the beginning of the church of Christ. It dates from the councils of eternity, when the Son, standing up before his Father, said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God,"—even then, offering himself a substitute and a sacrifice for men, he was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

III. Jesus is "the beginning" of salvation in every individual believer.

He is "all our salvation." We owe everything to Christ. Whatever was the instrument employed in our conversion, whether a silent book, or a solemn providence, or a living preacher, his grace began what had a beginning, but, thanks to God, never shall have an end—the health that never sickens, the life that never dies, the glory that never fades. Convincing us of sin, and revealing himself to us as a willing and all-sufficient Saviour, he began it through his Spirit at conversion; he carries it on through sanctification; and he shall crown it in glory. The preacher was but a man, drawing a bow at a venture. It was Jesus' eye which aimed the shaft, and his strength which bent the bow that sent the arrow quivering into our heart. When our sins were carrying us out to our burial, it was he that stopped the bier, and with his touch imparted life. Brought by others' prayers to the grave, where we lay rotting in our sins, it was his voice that pierced the ear of death, and brought us from the tomb. Having none in heaven or on earth but Christ, he has been all in all to us. Our hopes were born in his birth; our fears expired

in his death ; our guilt was buried in his sepulchre ; the sufferings of his cross were natal pangs, and to us and millions more his grave has been the womb of life.

The “beginning,” and therefore “the author,” Jesus is the finisher of our faith. He does no imperfect work ; half saving, or half sanctifying a man. Where he has begun a good work, he will carry it on to the end ; and unless he did, what would become of us ? Blessed Lord ! but that thy hand sustained us, how often had hell received us ! but that thy faithfulness did not fail with our faith, nor thy goodness ebb with our gratitude, nor thy love wane with ours, how often had we perished ! How often have we been as nearly damned as Simon was nearly drowned in the deep waters and waves of Galilee !—“How great, O Lord, has been thy mercy towards me ; thou hast brought up my soul from the lowest hell !”

We know that men have turned this doctrine to a bad purpose, just as to such a purpose many turn the best gifts of providence. But it is no reason why the children should be starved that dogs steal their meat. The man who presumes on this doctrine and continues in sin because grace abounds, affords the plainest evidence that he never has been converted—just as the falling star, by

falling, proves that it never was a true star, a thing of heaven ; and though it seemed to shoot through the stellar regions, and illumined its dusky path with a train of light, never was other than an atmospheric meteor—"of the earth, earthy." In one sense, the best will, and do often, fall ; but he who rises from his falls to mourn and leave his sins, whose peace is the child and whose faith is the parent of purity, can no more drop out of Christ, than a real star out of heaven. Jesus will keep that which God has committed to him ; he will perfect that which concerneth us.

How can it be otherwise ? He is ever near to them that call upon him ; nor can that happen to them which befell a child who had strayed away from its mother's side. She sought her darling all round her cottage, and wherever he had been wont to play. Alarmed, she rushed into the gloomy forest by her moorland home ; she called ; in frantic terror, she shrieked his name. No answer ; he was a lost child. A child lost ! the tidings spread like wildfire through the hamlet ; and, some leaving business, others pleasure, the country-side rose for the search ; and through that weary night, glen and mountain, moor and den, rung with the shouts, and gleamed with the lights of anxious searchers. The morn ushered in the Sabbath ; but brought no

rest—I will have mercy and not sacrifice. Believing, that had he been there who came to seek and save the lost, he would have led the way, they resumed the pursuit ; and for once, pious feet deserted the house of God. But all in vain. Hope was burning low, was sinking in the stoutest hearts—even in the mother's breast, when a woman heard a cry ; a low, feeble, moaning sound. One thrill of joy, one bounding rush, and there, with its dying face to heaven, lay the child on the cold ground ; its life ebbing fast, as it faintly cried, "Mother, mother, mother !" It was saved, yet how nearly lost ; and nearly lost because it had wandered from a mother's ear, and a mother's eye ! Its danger is never ours. From Christ, no darkness hides, no distance parts us ; and through whatever dangers his people pass, though they but turn the brink of the pit and very edge of hell, though they have such hairbreadth escapes that the righteous scarcely are saved, he will make good his words, "I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish."

The First-Born from the Dead.

The first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.—COLOSSIANS i. 18.

DEATH is an event we do not attempt to shut out of view. Here, our city has its cemeteries, which, by their taste and beauty, rather attract than repel a visit ; and there, where hoary trees fling their shadow on graves, stands the rural church, within whose humble walls the living worship in neighbourhood with the dead. The approach to the earthly sanctuary, a type of heaven, is by a path through the realms of death. When death occurs among us, friends and neighbours are invited to the funeral ; and in broad day the procession that slowly follows the nodding hearse, wends along our public streets. The spot which holds our dead we sometimes visit, and always regard as sacred ground ; a monument records their virtues ; or a willow, with its branches weeping above the grave, expresses our grief ; or a pine or laurel, standing in evergreen beauty when frosty

blasts have stripped the woods, symbolizes the hopes of the living, and the immortality of the dead ; or some sweet flowers, which, though they shed their blossoms like our hopes, and hide their heads awhile beneath the turf, spring up to remind us how those who sleep in Jesus are waiting the resurrection of the just.

I have read of a tribe of savages who have very different customs. They bury their dead in secret, by the hands of unconcerned officials. No grassy mound nor stone guides the poor mother's steps to the corner where her infant lies. The grave is levelled with the soil ; and afterwards, as some to forget their loss drive the world and its pleasures over their hearts, a herd of cattle is driven over the ground, till their hoofs have obliterated every trace of the burial. Seeking to forget death and its inconsolable griefs, these heathen resent any allusion to the dead. You may not speak of them ; name her lost one in a mother's hearing, nor recall a dead father to the memory of his son. There is no injury they feel more deeply. Their hearts recoil from the thought of the dead.

How strange, and unnatural ! No, not unnatural. Benighted pagans, their grief has none of the alleviations which are balm to our wounds ; none of the hopes that sustain us under a weight

of sorrows. Their dead are flowers withered, never to revive—joys gone, never to return. To remember them is only to keep open a rankling wound ; and preserve the memory of a loss which brought sore grief to the living, and no gain to the dead. To me, says Paul, to live is Christ, and to die is gain—they know nothing of this ; nor of the faith which associates the dead in Christ with a sinless world, and sunny skies, and shining angels, and songs seraphic, and crowns of glory, and harps of gold. Memory is but a curse, from which they seek relief by removing the picture from the chambers of their imagery, or turning its face to the wall.

Without the hope of a better world and apart from mercy, pardon, grace, and glory through the blood of Jesus, what were death to us, but an object of unutterable gloom ? I shrink from seeing it. Even with the consolations of the gospel, what sight so bitter as to see a loved one dying ; our sweet flower withering day by day on its drooping stalk ; the cold shadow, as of an eclipse, creeping over the whole horizon of our being, till, one hope after another disappearing in the deepening gloom, we are left, but for the light of God's Spirit and truth, to blank despair ? As we hang over dying couch or cradle, how it wrings the heart to see the imploring look turned on us, and we can minister

no relief; to hear the low moanings, and we cannot still them; and when the struggle is long protracted, to be forced to pray, that God would come in mercy to close this dreadful scene. There is no event so terrible as death; no sound so awful as that last sigh; no coldness so chill to the touch as the brow or face of the dead. And when, in place of one full of light, and life, and love, our arms embrace a pale, clay-cold corpse, when, for childhood's smiling face, pattering feet, prattling tongue, sparkling eye, and merry laughter, we have nothing but that solemn countenance, that rigid form, that marble brow, that cold, clammy hand, that silent tenant of a lonesome room, death, indeed, needs all the consolations of religion.

Apart from the hopes of a better and a brighter world, to one's self, also, death is an unutterable evil. What weary hours, and days, and nights, often usher in the closing scene? And that scene! what terrible sufferings may we have to endure, and others have to witness, in our dying chamber?—such as we have seen where the dying seemed to be struggling with an invisible enemy fixed on his throat, and whom he vainly tried to throw off? Steps he into a palace or a hovel, Death is the King of Terrors. In the ghastly countenance, the filmy eyes, the restless head, the wild tossing of

the arms, the hands that, as if they sought something to cling to, clutch the bed-clothes, the muttering lips, the wandering mind, the deep insensibility, the heavy breathing, the awful pauses, and that long-drawn, shivering sigh, which closes the scene, and seems to say, as the departing spirit casts one last look on all that is past and gone, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," death has the look of a tremendous curse.

Solomon pronounces a living dog to be better than a dead lion ; and I say, better be a living beggar than a dead king. I love to live—to walk abroad, to see the sun shine, to hear the birds sing, to wander by rippling stream, or sit on banks where sweet flowers blow ; I love the homes where I look on happy faces, receive welcome greeting, and hear kind voices speak. To be shut out from these, nailed up in a narrow coffin, buried in the dull earth, to moulder into dust and be forgotten, and, when fires are cheerily blazing on our own hearth, and songs and laughter by their merry ring tell of broken hearts healed again, to be lying cold, and lonely, and joyless in the tomb, are not things we love to dwell on. Our Lord himself shrank from death ; and fell at his Father's feet to cry, If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. None but the wretched court it ; wish to die ; to lie

down among the naked skulls and grim unsocial tenants of the grave. Faith herself, standing on the edge of the grave, turns her eye upward ; and, leaving the poor body to worms and dust, wings her flight heavenward ; follows the spirit to the realms of bliss, and loves to think of the dead as living—as not dead, but standing before the Lamb with crowns of glory, and bending on us looks of love and kindness from their celestial seats. Yes ; death needs all the comforts which religion can summon to our aid.

Nor are we left comfortless. By his life and death and resurrection Christ has fulfilled the expectations of prophets ; nor, though bold and grand, is the language too lofty which Hosea puts into his mouth, “O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” The Death of Death, the Life of the grave and greatest of all its tenants, he has conquered this conqueror of kings ; broken the prison ; bound the jailer ; and seized the keys to set all his captive people free, in the fulness of time. They are “prisoners of hope.” He “will bring back his banished.” He has entered into glory as their forerunner, or, as my text calls him, “the first-born from the dead.”

Let us consider in what respects Christ is “the first-born from the dead.”

I. He is so in the dignity of his person. He is the greatest who ever entered, or shall ever leave, the gates of death.

In a singularly bold flight of fancy, Isaiah sets forth the destruction of the Babylonian monarchy. He sees a mighty king descend into the grave, breaking its gloomy silence. His footsteps disturb the dead. They raise themselves in their coffins ; and as, all alone, he enters the domains of a monarch greater than himself, on his startled ear fall the voices of long buried kings, muttering, "Art thou also become as we? Art thou become like unto us?" This is a piece of imagery. When men die, be they kings or beggars, they sink into the grave like raindrops into the sea, as snow-flakes on the water—their fall may for a little agitate some living circles, but it never stirs the dead. Yet the descent into the tomb of him who was the Lord of glory, the fountain of all life, the creator of the sun that darkened above his cross and of the moon that shone on his lonely sepulchre, was an event which might well be set forth in the prophet's magnificent imagery. I can fancy all the dead astonished at the event ; and that, as Jesus enters the domain of the grave, a spirit-voice breaks its silence, to say

in the words of the prophet, "It is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?"

Fancy some great, good, brave, patriotic monarch, bound in chains—fancy him, after being ignominiously paraded through the public streets, thrust into the common gaol, to exchange the glory of a palace for the shame of a dungeon—how would such an event impress the spectators with the mutability of earthly grandeur; and how would such a reverse of fortune, borne out of love to his subjects, win their admiration, and move their love as much as their pity! Yet, what were such an event to that which, unnoticed by the world, is passing in yonder garden, where by the waning light of day two men and a group of women, amid silence only broken by sobs and soft whispers, are laying a poor, mangled, dead body, on its bed of spices? Nor man's, nor angel's eyes, had ever looked on such a scene. Solomon had said, Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? but what would he have said, had he seen the Son of God cradled among straw; still more, the author of life dead,

and buried in a tomb? Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, a sepulchre holds ; and though these skulls and bones are repulsive to the eye, the grave can boast of having held within its chambers one who, while he stooped to the doors of lowly cottages, was greater than any whom palaces ever opened to receive. But the language of Hosea has been literally accomplished. The regions of death were moved at Jesus' coming.

Never before nor since has the opening of its gates awakened any within the grave—they sleep too sound for that. How unmoved do parents lie when their children are laid by their side ; the mother never flings her arms around the babe that death restores to her bosom ; and to the cry of Room, room, the unmannerly beggar stirs not to make way for a king. The dead neither revere the good, nor respect the great. There is no love there ; and, unlike the passionate burst of joy, the eager rushing into each other's embrace, the smiles and tears, when the loving and long-parted meet again here, how cold and dreary the reunions in these silent meetings of the dead !

But Christ's descent into the grave shook its kingdom, and awoke those who were heedless of the shock of earthquakes. The dead were moved at his coming ; the graves were opened ; and the

inspired fancy became a literal fact. Waiting for him to lead the way, many dead saints deserted their tombs on the morning of his resurrection ; and in them, leading captivity captive, he was followed by the strangest train that ever graced the triumph of a returning conqueror. If we should certainly conclude, on seeing his captives pouring out of prison, that the jailer has been beaten and bound, these yawning tombs untouched by mortal hand, these buried men who return alive to Jerusalem, show that death's long reign is drawing to a close, and that the oldest of earth's kingdoms is tottering to its fall. Their escape plainly proved that death had received from Christ's hand, what no other hand could deal, a mortal blow. Thus, all the circumstances of our Lord's descent into the tomb and his resurrection out of it, proclaim him, as by heralds with the sound of royal trumpets, the Prince of life and greatest of the dead.

II. Because he rose by his own power.

There is no sensibility in the dead. The eyelids your fingers close, open no more to the light of day. The morning within the house restores a fresh sense of bereavement : and without it, wakens up business, pleasure, the music of skies and groves ;

but it wakens not the sleeper in that lonely chamber, who, once dreading to be left alone, is fearless now of darkness and of solitude.

There is no passion in the dead. The sight of them affects us, not our grief and sorrow them; the marble would feel our kiss as much as that icy brow; our tears will flow, nor does Christ forbid them, but their hottest gushes thaw not the fountains which death has frozen.

There is no power in the dead. The cold hand you lift drops; the poor body lies as it is laid; and so soon as the last sigh is drawn, though colour lingers on its cheek, and its warm limbs are not yet stiffened into cold rigidity, it can rise no more than the ashes on the hearth, to resume their original form and become again a branch green with leaves, or decked with blossoms. The dead can do nothing to help themselves; and thus in all cases but Christ's resurrection, life was not resumed but restored; it was given, not taken back. At the grave of Lazarus it proceeded from Christ's lips, wafted on the air to the ear of the dead; at the gate of Nain it passed from Christ's hand, streaming like an electric fluid into the widow's son; where Elisha lay stretched on the Shunammite's boy, eyes to eyes, hands to hands, lips to lips, prostrate and praying, he formed a connecting

medium by which life flowed out of him in whom its fulness dwells, to fill a vessel that death had emptied ; and at the last day, we shall not wake but be wakened—roused from sleep by the trump of God, as, blown by angel's breath, it sounds throughout the world, echoing in the deepest caves of ocean, and rending the marble of the tomb.

Now look at our Lord's resurrection. He rose in the silent night—no hand knocking on the door ; no voice in his ear ; no touch awaking him. Other watchers than Pilate's soldiers were by the sepulchre ; but these angels who guard this dead man's chamber door, beyond opening it, rolling away the stone, and looking on with wondering eyes, took no part in the scenes of that eventful morning. The hour sounds ; the time arrives ; Jesus stirs. He awakes of his own accord ; rises by his own power ; and arranging, or leaving attending spirits to arrange, the linen clothes, walks out on the dewy ground to turn grief into the greatest joy, and hail the breaking of the brightest morn that ever rose on a guilty world. That open, empty tomb assures us of a day when ours shall be empty too. He who raised himself, has power to raise his people. Panic-stricken soldiers flying the scene, and Mary rising from his blessed feet to haste to the city, rush through the streets, burst in

among the disciples, and cry with a voice of joy, He is risen, he is risen ! prove this was no vain boast, "I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

III. Because he is the only one who rose never to die again.

The child of the Shunammite, the daughter of the ruler, the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus, and all the saints who followed our Lord from the grave, were prisoners on parole. The grave took them bound to return. Dear-bought honours theirs ! Enoch and Elijah never tasted death, but these twice drank the bitter cup—with one cradle, each had two coffins, and with one birth, two burials ; and thus, that God might be glorified, through pains from which obscurer saints have been exempt, they in part fulfilled the saying of that dauntless martyr, who declared his love for Christ to be such, that if he had as many lives as hairs on his head, he would lay them all down for him. These honoured ones were out on bail ; after a while they returned, and, now lying in dusty death, they wait the summons of the resurrection. But Jesus waits

to summon, not to be summoned. The grave holds them, but heaven him ; for it also was moved at his coming ; and there, saints singing and angels worshipping at his feet, in the very body which was stretched on the cross and laid in the sepulchre for us, he fills his Father's throne. The King of kings and Lord of lords is "he who liveth and was dead."

IV. Because he has taken precedence of his people, who all shall rise from their graves to glory.

It is better for a poor man if he stand in need of royal favours, to have a friend at court than in his own humble cottage ; so it is better for us that Christ is in heaven with his Father than on earth with his people—"It is expedient for you, he said, that I go away." He has gone to prepare a place for us ; and, while his Spirit has come down to conduct the business of his church on earth, he watches over its affairs in heaven. He had work to do which could not otherwise be done ; and for that purpose, after resting three days in the grave, he rose to sleep no more, and be the first-born of the dead. Apart from that, precedence was his right. It belonged to him in the very nature of things—the king precedes his train ; the head rises first out of pit or grave, afterwards the body and its members ;

the foundation-stone is laid first, afterwards the stones of the superstructure; the elder brother breaks first from a mother's womb, afterwards the children of whom he is forerunner.

It is as the prelude of our own resurrection, that Christ's is the object of our greatest satisfaction and joy. In these cast-off grave clothes, the napkin and linen shroud, there is more to draw our eyes, and awaken our interest and admiration, than in the robes or royal purple of the greatest monarch of earth. That empty tomb, rudely hollowed in the rock, is a greater spectacle than Egypt's mighty pyramids, or the costliest sepulchres that have held the ashes of the proudest kings. How full of meaning is its emptiness!—what good news to the Church in Mary's disappointment!—what joys flow in these women's tears! Thank God, they could not find him. He is not there. No, Mary! they have not taken away your Lord; no robber has rifled that sacred tomb—see, the dew lies sparkling on the grass, nor feet have brushed it but those of one who has left the grave. He is risen; and, as the first fruits and first ripe sheaf that were offered to the Lord, his resurrection is the pledge and promise of a coming harvest. Henceforth the grave holds but a lease of the saints; “Because he rose, we shall rise also.”

Sweeter than the full chorus of skies and green-wood, are the first notes of the warbler that pipes away the winter, and breaks in on its long, drear silence ; and more welcome than the flush of summer's gayest flowers, is the snow-drop that hangs its pure white bell above the dead, bare ground. And why ? They are the first-born of the year, the forerunners of a crowd to follow. In these snow-drops, bells that ring in the spring with its joys and loves and singing birds, my fancy's eye sees the naked earth clothed in beauty ; the streams, like children let loose, dancing and laughing and rejoicing in their freedom ; bleak winter gone, and nature's annual resurrection—and in that solitary, simple note, my fancy hears the carol of larks ; moor, hillside, and woodlands full of song, ringing all with music. So in Christ, the first-born, I see the grave giving up its dead ; from the depths of the sea, from lonely wilderness and crowded churchyards they come—like the dews of the grass, an innumerable multitude. Risen Lord ! we rejoice in thy resurrection ; and hail it as the harbinger of our own. The first to come forth, thou art the elder brother of a family, whose countless numbers Abraham saw in the dust of the desert, whose holy beauty he saw shining in the stars of heaven.

The first-born ! This spoils the grave of its

horrors, changing it into a capacious womb which death is filling with the germs of life. The first fruits! This explains why men called the churchyard, as once they did, "God's acre;" looking at its grassy mounds in the light of that expression, the eye of faith sees it change into a field sown with the seeds of immortality. Blessed field! where the most beautiful flowers shall spring, and the most bountiful harvest be gathered. In common fields "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" but here how great the difference between what is sown amid mourners' tears, and what shall be reaped amid angels' joys; between the wasted body we restore to the earth, and the noble form that shall spring from its ashes. Who saw the rolling waves stand up a rocky wall; who saw the water of Cana flow out purple wine; who saw Lazarus's festering corpse, with health glowing on its cheek, and its arms enfolding happy sisters—saw nothing to match the change which the grave shall work on our mouldering bones. Sown in corruption, they shall rise in incorruption, mortal putting on immortality. How beautiful they shall be! Never more shall time write age on a wrinkled brow; the saints shall possess unfading beauty, and enjoy perpetual youth; a pure soul shall be mated to a perfect body, and angel forms shall

lodge angel minds—there shall be no more death, nor sighing, nor sorrow, for there shall be no more sin.

If we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, what reconciling views of death does this open up? Why not think better, and oftener of death? No doubt his hand is rough, and his voice is gruff; and, rudely seizing us by the throat, as if he were an officer and we were the prisoners of justice, he shows none of the courtly manners of Eleazer when he went to fetch a bride to Isaac; yet why should those things make us overlook the glittering crown he bears in his grisly hand, and the message he brings us—to come away home. We should familiarise our minds with this event, and train ourselves to think of it more as glory than as death; as returning to our Father and our Father's house; as going home to be with Jesus and the saints—or, if you will have death in, as the death of all sin and sorrow; the death of Death. To a child of God, what are its pains but the pangs of birth; its struggles, but the battle that precedes the victory; its tossings but the swell and surf that beats on the shores of eternal life; its grave but a bed of peaceful rest, where the bodies of saints sleep out the night which precedes the glories of a resurrection morn? I know a churchyard where this is strikingly set forth in the

rude sculpturing of a burial stone. Beneath an angel figure, that, with outstretched wings and trumpet, blows the resurrection, there lies a naked skull. Beneath him and beside this emblem of mortality, two forms stand ; one is the tenant of the grave below, the other it is impossible to mistake—it is the skeleton figure of the King of Terrors. His dart lies broken on the ground ; and the hand that has dropped it, is stretched out over the skull, and held in the grasp of the other figure. Enemies reconciled, the man bravely shakes hands with death—his whole air and port showing that they are sworn friends. As if he had just heard Jesus announcing, “I am the resurrection and the life,” you seem to hear him say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.

We shall rise like him who had the pre-eminence in his resurrection which he has in the church he redeemed with his blood, and in the universe he created by his power. Let him have it in our thoughts, our lives, our hearts. Who else should have it? Holy Spirit! enable us to enthrone him in our hearts whom his Father hath enthroned in the heaven of heavens. Pre-eminence! Shall

we give it to the world that hated, to the devil that tempted, or to the sins that crucified him? God forbid! Help us, Lord Jesus, to love thee best and serve thee first; to follow thee—leaving all to follow thee. If in one sense we cannot say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? because we may have father, mother, brother, sister, children there, whom we loved, and love still, and will rejoice again to embrace, we would say, “Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, thou art the altogether lovely;” and if in one sense we cannot say, “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee,” we would say, There is none on earth that I desire before thee, or deem equal to thee! Blessed Lord, whose love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women, to thee, as the sun of my firmament, may moon and stars make obeisance; to thee, as the needle to its pole, may this trembling heart be ever turning; to thee, as the waters seek the ocean, may its desires be ever flowing!—the best be thine, the honour thine, the glory thine, the kingdom thine!—the feast to thee, the fragments to others. Be thou preferred above my chief joy—in all things have the pre-eminence!

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

The Fulness.

It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.

COLOSSIANS i. 19.

OUR happiness depends in a very small degree upon what is external to us. Its springs lie deep within ; like those perennial waters that, warm in winter and cold in summer, have their fountains bordered with evergreen grass. Yet, how common is it to think otherwise ! Hence the keen pursuit of pleasure ; lovers' sighs ; war's fierce ambition ; the student's labour, who feeds his midnight lamp with the oil of life ; the race for riches ; the desperate struggles some make to keep their heads above poverty ; and the toil and trouble of others to rise in the world, as it is called — keep a more sumptuous table, wear a costlier dress, live in a more spacious house than satisfied their humbler, but happier parents. Such paths, though crowded and beaten down by the feet of thousands who tread on each other's heels, never conducted man to happiness. It lies in another

direction. Be he poor or rich, whether he pines on a sick-bed or has health glowing on his cheek, is to be married or hanged to-morrow, "Blessed," or, as we should say, Happy, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

The way to secure happiness is not to bring our circumstances up to our minds, but our minds down to our circumstances. Many birds wear a finer coat than the lark, nor do any dwell in a lower home; yet of the feathered songsters which soars so high, sings so merrily, or teaches man so well how to forget the day's cares and labours in the bosom of his family, as when, neither envying the peacock his splendid plumage, nor the eagle her lofty realm, it drops singing into its grassy nest, to caress its young, and shield them with its wings from the cold dews of night? To indulge an unsanctified ambition, to attempt to bring our circumstances up to our minds, is to fill a sieve with water; or the grave with dead; or the sea with rivers. It is impossible; the passions that in such a case seek gratification, are like that drunkard's thirst—burning the fiercer for indulgence, and craving for more the more they get. It is often difficult, I admit, to bring our minds down to our

circumstances ; but he attempts a thing, not difficult, but impossible, who attempts to bring his circumstances up to the height of his ambition ; since, as the old adage says, nature is contented with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. May ours be the happiness of him who, content with less than little, pleased with whatever pleases our heavenly Father, careful for nothing, thankful for anything, and prayerful in everything, can say with Paul, I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content !

Before directing your attention to the fulness that is in Christ, let me embrace the opportunity which the expression offers of exhorting you,

I. To be pleased with whatever pleases God.

A difficult lesson—yet there was an Italian who had learned it so well, that all who witnessed his magnanimity under the most adverse fortunes, stood astonished. He recalled this grand saying of an old heathen, that a good man struggling with adversity was a sight for the gods to look at. It was not that his natural temper was too sweet to be soured, or too phlegmatic to be moved ; nor was it that, like a cold-blooded animal, he did not feel the iron when it entered his soul—he felt it

keenly, but bore it bravely. Here lay the secret of his heroic patience; First, he said, I look within me, then without me, afterwards beneath me, and last of all above me.

First, he looked within him; and saw there such corruption, guilt, unworthiness, as led him to the conclusion that he deserved no good at the hand of God; and that, therefore, whatever blessings his calamities had left to him, were more than he had any right to expect. We write our blessings on the water, and our afflictions on the rock; so that those are forgotten, but these are remembered. Yet, if we would turn from our trials to look back on our lives and into our hearts, how would gratitude for mercies, always undeserved and often unacknowledged, temper our grief? We might continue to mourn; but never murmuring, we should say, "I will sing of mercy and judgment."

Next, he looked without him; and saw there, what all may see, many more severely tried than himself; thousands in point of merit not more unworthy, yet in point of circumstances much more unfortunate. And would it not help to clear away the vapours, and rebuke the discontent, and mend the temper of many grumblers, were they to leave their comfortable homes to pay occasional visits to the abodes of wretchedness and poverty?

They would learn to be thankful that they are not as many are ; and how thankful many would be, to be as they are. There are poor wretches in this world who would gladly change places with any of us. It has reconciled us to the discomforts of lashing rain and blasting storm on the land, to think of the seamen tossing in that tempest on the deep, or hanging on by the shrouds, or whelmed in the ocean ; their last prayer washed from their lips, their cries for help drowned in the roar of breakers—and when lying on a bed of sickness, with kind faces around us, angels, as it were, ministering to our wants, it has helped to reconcile us to the weary pillow to think of them who, far from home, lay bleeding on the battle-field ; none near to raise their drooping head, or answer their dying cry of “water, water!”—and when death, unwelcome visitor, has entered our home, the one coffin felt less heavy, when, looking on sweet ones spared, we thought of dwellings that the spoiler had, or had all but, desolated ; such a thought calming the troubled breast, and rebuking murmurs with a Peace, be still. With this argument the pious neighbour of a humble cottage approached a mother who, wringing her hands, hung, in wild frantic grief, over her dead babe ; the wildness of her passion, as a vehement wind beats

down the sea, calming the grief of others. Laying her hand kindly on the mother's shoulder, she said, with eyes full of tears, and a voice that trembled with emotion, "Hush, Mary; you have but one pair of empty, little shoes to look on—be you thankful; I have six of them." Yes; however severely tried we are, however all God's billows may seem to be going over us, only let us look abroad, and we shall see that our afflictions are not only far less than our iniquities deserve, but far fewer than those which many suffer.

He looked next beneath him; and there, in fancy's eye, lay his grave—a grassy mound, six feet of earth! And it seemed to him folly to repine over the loss of broad lands, when so small a portion of earth was all he would need, and, though stretched out at his full length, could occupy! To meet the stroke of misfortune with such thoughts, is to blunt its edge, since, when it does its worst, it cannot strip us so bare as death shall strip the most prosperous of men? The worst adversity takes time by the forelock, and, by a few brief years, anticipates the hand of the greatest spoiler—death. As we came into the world, we shall leave it, naked; we brought nothing in, and certainly we can carry nothing out—neither the men of fortune their gains, nor the men of fame their

laurels. When all the acts of life's play are over, and the curtain drops, and the lights are put out, and the stage is deserted, its kings, queens, priests, soldiers, peasants, statesmen, dropping their distinctive characters, return to one common level. There is one event to all ; and it shall be with us, on leaving the stage of life, as with actors, whom men applaud, not because of the parts they play, but of the way in which they play them. "Well done" from God, from Jesus Christ, from the tongues of ten thousand angels, shall crown the life of a good servant, but not that of a bad sovereign ; for God has no respect of persons, but will reward every man, not according to his place, but according to the way he filled it—every man according to his work.

He looked last of all above him ; and saw his home in heaven. A glorious prospect ! enough to sustain us under our severest trials ! To that refuge our thoughts may always fly ; and no pit is so deep but it has that opening over head—making it, though dark below, always bright above us. Let the world reel, let banks break, let sudden changes overwhelm affluence into the depths of poverty, let convulsion succeed convulsion, till the stateliest fabrics and firmest fortunes are hurled into the dust, heaven is sure ; and how blessed to know

that. No tempests sweep its glassy sea ; there it is calm, when it is stormy here ; clear, when it is cloudy here ; day, when it is darkness here ; nor are those realms of bliss more affected by the events of earth, than the stars by the earthquakes that shake our world, or the thunders that shake its skies. By these considerations let us strengthen our minds ; giving them that firmness of texture which shall preserve us from being devoured by cares, as close-grained oak is from the insects which consume the heart of softer woods. Let God give his blessing to such thoughts, and they will enable a Christian to meet evil as the mountain crag looks out on the approaching storm.

Yet the Italian's explanation of his equanimity under trials to which all are exposed, and against which, therefore, we do well to be fortified, does not bring out the grand secret of a calm, resigned, happy spirit ; of a patriarch's unparalleled patience, and a prophet's dauntless courage. That lies not so much in looking either within or without, in dropping our eye on the grave or raising it to the crown, as in looking to God. The brightest light that falls on trials issues from his throne. It was seeking God in them that changed the whole aspect of Job's afflictions, and gave birth to his well-known exclamation, "The Lord gave, and the Lord

hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." And it was also a sight of God that inspired the courage with which the prophet eyed the approach of misfortune ; and said, defying it as a man on a rock defies the billows of an angry sea, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Extravagant as that may sound in some ears, it is the language of a calm, sober, solid faith. For what should hinder him who sees his father in God, and believes that all events proceed from his kind hand, are managed by his unerring wisdom, and are prompted by his tender love, from kissing the rod, saying, "Father, not my will, but thine be done ;" from taking the cup to drain it to its bitterest dregs. Having perfect confidence in his wisdom and love, we do God only the justice which we would expect from our own children, when we believe that he doth not afflict willingly, and never chastens but in love. His was a noble saying who, when crops were rotting in flooded fields, and ruin stared him from the scowling heavens, and others cursed the weather, replied on

being asked his reason for saying that it pleased him, It pleases God, and whatever pleases him pleases me. That sounds like an echo of the old prophet's voice; and we are ready to envy him whose faith could so triumph over such great misfortunes. Yet why should not a believer lie as calmly in the arms of God's providence as he lay in infancy on a mother's breast? Having an ever-living, an everlasting, an ever-loving father in God, how may we welcome all providences; and drawing good from every evil, as the bee extracts honey even from poisoned flowers, how may we say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" Were we submissive to the will of God, it would always fare with us as with the pliant reeds that love the hollows, and fringe the margin of the lake—bending to the blast, not resisting it, they raise their heads anew, unharmed by the storm that snaps the mountain pine, and rends hearts of oak asunder. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Let us now consider that which, while it pleased God, will certainly please all his people.

II. The fulness that is in Christ.

Within the palace of Shushan, but outside the throne-room, Queen Esther stands. They who enter the king's presence unsummoned, peril their life ; so that, uninvited, yet resolved to dare the penalty, she stands there with her jewelled foot upon the grave. A noble spectacle ! not so much for the beauty of her person, still less for the splendour of her apparel, as for the resolution to venture all in saving her people, or perishing in the attempt. In youth, the pleasures of a court, the affections of her husband, the rank and honours of a queen, she has everything to make life attractive. Her golden cup is foaming to the brim. But her mind is made up to die ; and so, with a silent prayer, and "if I perish, I perish," on her lips, she passes in ; and now stands mute, pale, yet calm and resolute outside the ring of nobles, to hear her doom. She has not long to endure the agony of suspense. Her fate, which seems to tremble in the balance, is soon determined. No sooner does the monarch catch sight of the beautiful woman, brave and good as beautiful, whom he raised to share his bed and throne, than her apprehensions vanish ; the clouds break ; and she finds, as Christ's people often do,

that her fears have wronged her lord. Instantly his hand stretches out the golden sceptre—proof of favour. The business of the court is stopped ; a cry of the Queen, the Queen ! divides the crowd of nobles ; and up that brilliant lane she walks in majesty, and in charms that outvie her gems, to hear the welcome words, “What wilt thou, Queen Esther ? and what is thy request ? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.”

What wilt thou, Queen Esther ?—is an echo of the voice which faith catches from the lips of Jesus ; and the whole scene presents an imperfect image of that which heaven presents when the gate opens, and, angels and archangels making way for him, a believer enters to offer his petitions at the throne of grace. Was that beautiful woman once a slave ? So was he. In her marriage to the Persian was lowliness allied to majesty ? So it was when faith united him to Christ. And as to her apparel, the royal diadem, the raiment of needle-work bedecked with gold and sparkling gems, wherewith her maids have attired their mistress, the believer wears a finer, costlier robe—the righteousness that clothes, and the graces of the Spirit that adorn him, win the admiration of angels’ eyes, and shine resplendent amid the glories of a city whose gates are of pearls, and whose streets are paved

with gold. To the half of his kingdom, the Persian promised whatever his queen might ask ; a generous, right royal offer, which yet helps us, as a molehill helps us to estimate the height of a mountain, to form some estimate of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Half his kingdom ! Jesus offers nothing by halves. His promise is illimitable—all mine is thine. With a generosity confined neither to kingdoms, nor continents, nor worlds, nor heaven itself, he lays the whole universe at a believer's feet. Whatever we need we shall get, and there is nothing that we can ask which we shall not receive. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. Transferring divine wealth, if I may so speak, to our account in the bank of heaven, and giving us an unlimited credit there, Jesus says, " All things, whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Away, then, with cares and fears !

In regard to Christ's fulness, I remark—

1. That in him there is all fulness of mercy to pardon.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so," says Solomon, "doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour"—such great mischief little things can do. One small leak will sink the

biggest ship that ever sailed the ocean ; one bad link in her chain cable, and, parting from the anchor, she is hurled on the horrid reef, or driven before the fury of the tempest ; and when the signal is given, and eager crowds wait to cheer the launch, and the bosom of the sea is swelling to receive her into its arms, even one little wedge left on the slips arrests her progress. And had there been the smallest doubt expressed in the Bible about the fulness of mercy, and the power of Christ's blood to cleanse from all sin—sins as well of the deepest as of the lightest dye, what a stumbling-block had been there ? I believe that it would have arrested the steps of thousands, now happy in Christ, or safe in heaven, as they went to throw themselves at his feet, and cry, Lord, save us, we perish !

But there is no such doubt. A herald of the cross, I stand here in my Master's name to proclaim a universal amnesty. When the last gun is fired, and pardon is proclaimed in reconquered provinces, is it not always marked by some notable exceptions ? When the sword of war is sheathed that of justice is drawn, only to be returned to its scabbard after being filled with blood ; for they need not look for mercy in the hour of retribution, who wreaked ruthless vengeance on

helpless women, nor had pity on sweet, tender babes. But from the pardon of redeeming mercy none are excepted but those, who, refusing to accept it, except themselves. Are you unjust?—Christ Jesus died, the just for the unjust. Are you sinners?—He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Are you the vilest of the vile?—He never lifted his foot to spurn the guiltiest away. He pitied whom others on this earth spurned; received whom they rejected; and loved whom they loathed. The vilest, meanest, most wretched outcasts have a friend in him; a mother's door may be shut against them, but not his. It was his glory once to be reproached as the friend of sinners, and it is his glory still. He faced contumely to save them; he endured death to save them; and now, be you groaning under a load of cares or guilt, of sins or sorrows, kind and gracious Lord! he says, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, "which also leaned on his breast at supper," and lingered by his cross, and was entrusted with the care of his mother, and more than any of the others enjoyed his master's intimacy and knew his mind, uses a very broad expression. He says, not as one

who balances his language, and carefully selects his words, lest he should compromise and commit his master too far, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous:" adding, "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole* world." The whole world!—ah! some would say, that is dangerous language. It is God's language; John speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. It throws a zone of mercy around the world. Perish the hand that would narrow it by a hair's-breadth! Beneath God's grace in Jesus Christ, as beneath that ample sky, there is room for all the men and women in the wide world; so that none shall be damned but they who damn themselves. It were to make God a liar to doubt that our sins can be pardoned; ay, and shall be pardoned, if we seek forgiveness. The largest ocean has its bounds, and so, in its vast orbit, has the sun itself, but this pardon has no limits in time, or age, or guilt, or class, or character. It is clogged with no condition but that you accept it.

One might fancy that now all shall certainly be saved. Who will not accept of it? Offer a starving man bread, he takes it; a poor man money, he takes it; a sick man health, he takes it; an ambitious man honour, he takes it; offer

man a life-boat in the wreck, or pardon at the gallows, oh ! how gladly he takes it. Alas, salvation, which is the one thing needful, is the only thing he will not accept—he will stoop to pick a piece of gold out of the mire, but not rise out of the mire to receive a crown from heaven. What folly ! What infatuation ! May God by his Spirit empty our hearts of pride, and take away the evil heart of unbelief ! for vain here is the speech or help of man. Arise, O Lord, and plead the cause that is thine own ; and, breaking the spell of sin, help us to cry with the man of old, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief !

2. There is all fulness of grace to sanctify in Christ.

“My leanness ! my leanness !” the lamentation of the old prophet is one which God’s people have often used in mourning over their spiritual condition. It may be very low and very sad—presenting the contrast between a famished soul, and a pampered body ; an increase of earthly, and a diminution of sacred joys ; more money in the bank at the year’s end, and less grace in the heart ; the tide of worldly fame flowing, and that of God’s favour ebbing ; gardens, orchards, woodlands, and the fields of nature all green and gay and beautiful, beauty without, and barrenness within—graces withering,

prayers dull, faith weak, love cold, desires feeble, much, in short, to fill the saint with alarm, and send him to his knees crying, "My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word!"

But why is it, or how should it be, so? Why burns the virgin's lamp with such a flickering flame? Why runs the stream of grace so small—shrunk to the size of a summer brook? Why are the best of us no better, holier, happier than we are? God hath not forgotten to be gracious, nor hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies; the supplies are not exhausted, nor is the fountain empty; nor is our Father fallen into poverty, that his children have to go about meanly begging of the world a share of its enjoyments. It is easy to know why so many poor children in this city have misery stamped on their young faces, and look as if they had never smiled in this world, nor found it smiling on them—a tyrant rules at home, selfish, harsh, stern, and cruel. Hapless creatures, many wander shoeless and shivering on our frosty streets; and with hunger in their hollow cheeks, and beggary hung on their backs, they hold out their skinny hands for charity; because their father is poor, or dead, or, worse than dead, is the base slave of a most damning vice,—a drunkard, whose voice they fly, and whose reeling step they tremble

to hear. But what have God's children to do with unhappy looks?

God is Love—"Fury is not in me, saith the Lord;" and with fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore in him, what can you want? Tell your wishes to your Father. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Can he who justified not sanctify? Though there may be a hard fight for it, can he, who enlisted us under his banner, not provide munitions of war enough to secure the victory? Can he, who led the march out of Egypt, not beat down our foes, and conduct us in triumph over a thousand dangers and a thousand difficulties on to the promised land? Oh, yes; there is all efficiency, and sufficiency in Jesus Christ to crown the work of grace, and complete what he has begun. There is his Holy Spirit to sanctify you; and in him a store of grace which, like the widow's barrel that grew no emptier for all the meals it furnished, will appear the fuller the more you draw on it. Trust the grace of God. As with an arch, it stands the firmer, the more it is weighted; its sufficiency, at least, will be the more evident, and the more clearly you will see the truth of the promise, My grace is sufficient for thee. Whether, therefore, you want more faith, purity of heart, or peace of mind, more light or love, a

humbler or a holier spirit, a calmer or a tenderer conscience, a livelier sense of Christ's excellences or of your own unworthiness, more tears for Jesus' feet or more honours for his head, ask, nor fear to ask too much. With a well ever full and ever flowing, our vessels need never be empty. No earthly fortune will stand daily visits to the bank, but this will. You may go too seldom, you cannot go too often, to the throne ; you may ask too little, you cannot ask too much ; for in Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

III. There is a constant supply of pardoning and sanctifying grace in Christ.

It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell—*dwelt*, not come and go, like a way-faring man, who, tarrying but a night, is with us to-day and away to-morrow ; not like the shallow, noisy, treacherous brook that, vanishing in the heat of summer, fails when most needed, but like a deep-seated spring, which, rising silently though affluently at the mountain's foot, ever overflows its grassy margin, equally unaffected by the long droughts that dry the wells, and the frosts that pave the neighbouring lake with ice. So fail the joys of earth ! and so flow, replenished by the

fulness that is in Christ, the pleasures and the peace of piety. It cannot be otherwise—"If a man love me, says Jesus, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

I have read how the skeletons of men, all withered and white, are found in the burning desert, not only on the way to the fountain, but grim and ghastly on its very banks, with their skulls stretched over its margin. Panting and faint, ready to fill a cup with gold for its fill of water, they press on to the well ; directing their course by the tall green palms that rise above the glaring sands. Already, in anticipation, they drink where others had been saved. They reach the well. Alas ! sad sight for these dim eyes, the well is dry. Stony horror in their looks, how they gaze into the empty basin ; or fight with man and beast for the muddy drops that but exasperate their thirst. The desert reels around them ; hope expires ; some cursing, others praying, they sink, and expire. And by and by the sky darkens, lightnings flash, loud thunders roll, the rain pours down, and the treacherous waters rise to float long fair tresses, and kiss the pale lips of death.

But yonder, where the cross stands up to mark the fountain of the Saviour's blood and heaven's

grace, no dead souls lie. Though once a Golgotha, Calvary has ceased to be a place of skulls. Where men went once to die, they now go to live ; and to none that ever went there for pardon, and peace, and holiness, did God say, Seek ye me in vain. There are times when the peace of God's people, always like a river, is like one in flood ; overflowing its margin, and rolling its mighty current between bank and brae—there are times, also, when their righteousness, always like the waves of the sea, seems like the tide at the stream ; as, swelling beyond its ordinary bounds, it floats the boats and ships that lie highest on the beach ; but faith and prayer find always fulness of mercy to pardon, and of grace to sanctify, in Jesus Christ. The supply is inexhaustible.

Mountains have been robbed of their gold, mines of their diamonds, and the depths of ocean of its pearly gems. The demand has exhausted the supply ; so that silence and solitude now reign over once busy scenes—the caverns ring no longer to the miner's hammer, nor is the song of the pearl-fisher heard upon the deep. But the riches of grace are inexhaustible ; all that have gone before us have not made them less, and we shall make them no less to those who follow. When they have supplied the wants of millions yet unborn, the last

of Adam's race, that lonely man, over whose head the sun is dying, beneath whose feet the earth is reeling, shall stand by a fountain as full as that which this day invites you to drink and live ; to wash and be clean.

It is an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble river, and think, that although it has been flowing on for at least six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want ; and on watching the rise of the sun, as he shoots above the crest of the mountain, or, in a sky draped with golden curtains, springs from his ocean bed, how wonderful to think that, though he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and painted the flowers of so many summers, and whitened the fields of so many autumns, he shines as brilliant as ever—his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his floods of light less full for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet these are but images of the fulness that is in Christ ; and how should that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing. For, when the flames of the last day have licked up that stream, and the light of that glorious sun is quenched in darkness or

veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fulness that is in Christ shall flow on throughout eternity to the happiness of the redeemed. Image of God, divine Redeemer! in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore; and what thou hast gone to heaven to prepare, may we at death be called up to enjoy!

The Reconciler.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.—COLOSSIANS i. 20.

THE salutations that pass between man and man differ in different countries. Boaz, for example, goes out to see his reapers. The field is flashing with sickles; the tall corn falls to the sweep of young men's arms, and to maiden's songs; and widows, orphans, little children, all made welcome to share the bounties of providence and the fulness of a good man's cup, glean on behind them. A busy, joyous, crowded harvest-field, where brown labour plies her task in a bright autumn day, presents as pleasant a scene as we can look on; though now-a-days, besides the gleaners, we miss the kindly, pious intercourse between master and servants which lent a peculiar charm to Bethlehem's harvests. Boaz moves on from band to band; and, as each stops to do him reverence, he says, "The Lord be with you," and meet reply to such pious, courteous language, they answer, "The

Lord bless thee." Without undervaluing the progress which the world has made, since then, in arts and science, in substantial wealth and the more general diffusion of the pleasures and comforts of life, surely it has not been all gain. How can we look back without some regret on those happy days when children played, and no ragged orphans pined, in the streets ; when manners were simple, and people were guileless ; when the rich were kind to the poor, and the poor did not scowl on the rich ; when nobody was trodden on or neglected, and no wide, yawning gulf separated the highest from the lowest classes of society.

The ordinary salutation of the East was one of peace. It is so still. Seated on his fiery steed and armed to the teeth, the Bedouin careers along the desert. Catching, away in the haze of the burning sands, a form similarly mounted and similarly armed approaching him, he is on the alert ; for life is a precarious possession among these wild sons of freedom ; his long spear drops to the level ; and grasping it in his sinewy hand he presses forward, till the black eyes that glance out from the folds of his shawl recognise in the stranger one of a friendly tribe, between whom and him there is no quarrel, no question of blood to settle. The sun is hot, and it is far to their tents ; so they pass

—like two ships in mid-ocean; they pull no rein, but sweep on, with a “Salem Aleikum,” Peace be unto you! This beautiful salutation, like their flowing attire, and the black tents of Kedar, and the torch procession at their marriages, is one of the many stereotyped habits of the East. Throughout the Holy Land and the neighbouring countries, the modern traveller hears it still; unchanged, as if it were but yesterday that David was a fugitive in the wilderness of Paran, and sent this message to that rude, surly, niggard churl, with whom Abigail, “a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance,” was unhappily mated, “Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.”

Beautiful as this custom is, like the wall-flower that springs from a mouldering ruin, it sprung from an unhappy condition of society. Why the salutation of peace? but because frequent wars, sudden irruptions of hostile tribes, made the people sigh for peace. Hence their habit of expressing their kindness to each other in the wish that they might have peace—a blessing which many had not, and which they who had, might not long enjoy. War does not take us unawares. We see the storm-cloud gathering before it bursts; and by prudent policy may avert it, or, if it be in-

evitable, prepare bravely to meet it. But this curse of humanity, this dreadful scourge, fell on the villages and cities of these countries with the suddenness of the sea-squall that strikes the ship, and, ere time is found to reef a sail or lower a boat, throws her on her beam-ends, and sends her, crew and cargo, foundering into the deep. Look at the case of Job!—camels, cattle, sheep, and servants gone, he is reduced in the course of one day from princely affluence to the most abject poverty. One morning the sun rises in peace on Abraham's tents; and ere noon or nightfall they are ringing with cries to the rescue; children are crying, women are weeping, and men are arming; there is wild confusion, hot haste to mount and away; and Abraham, with two hundred retainers at his back, scours the country, raising it as he goes, to deliver Lot and his family from the hand of the spoilers. Three days ago, David and his followers left peace brooding over a quiet scene; and where is Ziklag on their return? They come back, but not to happy homes; there is only silence and a mass of smoking ruins; no wife hastens to embrace her husband, no child runs to climb its father's knee. The red-handed spoiler has been there; their mountain nest has been harried; and, appalled at the desolation, these stout-hearted men

burst into frantic grief, weeping till, as the Bible says, they can weep no more. Recalling these scenes, it is easy to understand how the most kind and common greeting in such countries was, "Peace be unto you."

Though the practice would ill accord with our conventional manners, that have often more of art than of nature, I think, considering the day, the place, the purpose of the assembly, it were a beautiful and appropriate thing, when ministers and people assemble in the house of God, to meet after the manner of Boaz and his reapers—the minister, on appearing in the pulpit, saying, The Lord be with you, and the people responding, The Lord bless thee. We sit under our vine and fig-tree, namely, good laws, a free government, a home around which the sea throws her protecting arms, and a stout people who fear God and honour the king, and thus preserved from the fears of these eastern countries, we have not learned their fashions. Yet when we ransack their sunny lands for gay flowers to adorn our gardens, why should we not transplant some of their beautiful habits? While others introduce offensive novelties into the pulpit, as if the gospel required such wretched aids, he would follow the footsteps, and give utterance to the spirit of Jesus, who, boldly

breaking the ice of our cold customs, should meet his people on the morning of the blessed Sabbath with his Master's salutation, "Peace be unto you!"

With these words our Lord accosted his disciples, on returning from his grave; nor on his lips were they mere words of course, the ordinary courtesies of life. How well did they suit the occasion! The battle of salvation has been fought out, and the great victory won; and in that salutation Jesus, his own herald, announces the news. Passing through the barred and bolted door which protects the upper room where his disciples were met, he suddenly appears among them to fulfil the expectations with which angels sang his advent, and ushered him into a distracted, guilty world. He had to recall her from heaven, where she had fled in alarm at the Fall, or, rather, had to seek her in the gloomy retreats of death, yet he brings back sweet, holy Peace to earth; and hastening to tell the good news, the tidings of great joy, he proclaims it in the words, "Peace be unto you!" He shows them his hands with the nail-marks; he uncovers his side with the spear-scar; and when the disciples, with streaming eyes, are gazing on these affecting tokens, his heart swells, fills, overflows with tenderness, and, as if he could never tire of saying it, nor they of hearing it, he

bends over them to say again, and again, Peace be unto you!

Suppose that, instead of descending, like dews, in those gracious, but silent and unseen, influences of the Spirit which the people should pray for and the preacher should trust to, our Lord were to appear in a visible form, revealing his glory to every eye, how would he address us? Would he not bring from heaven, the very salutation which he brought from the grave? As he looked around on those whom his blood had purchased and his grace renewed, I can fancy him breaking the deep silence, and dissipating the sudden terrors such a vision might produce, with the old, kind, gracious words, Peace be unto you! And what a load would that take off some hearts; like his voice on Galilee, how would it calm some troubled minds; what a gracious answer would it bring to some earnest prayers? But to hear his voice, to behold his face, to be assured of forgiveness from his own lips, these are joys reserved for heaven itself; yet, the next best thing is to be assured, as we are in my text, that peace has been made, and that God, for the purpose of reconciling us to himself, has made it through the blood of Christ's cross.

I. The text implies that by nature man is at enmity with God.

So says the apostle Paul. Nor is it possible to lay down that doctrine more clearly or strongly than he does in these remarkable words, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." He does not say that it is merely in a state of enmity; not at all—states and frames undergoing change, and being variable as wind or weather. But as God is love, so the carnal mind *is* enmity. This being so much the nature, essence, element of its existence, that if you took away the enmity, it would cease to be; enmity being the breath of its life, the very marrow of its bones. From such a view of the heart, some start back as from a hideous picture; they hesitate to believe it. Others plainly, indignantly deny it. Pointing us to a beautiful, angel-like child, as, with open brow and unclouded face, it bends at a mother's knee to lift its little hands to heaven and repeat from her gentle lips its evening prayer, they ask who can fancy that creature to be enmity against God? True. But who would fancy, as it twines its arms around a mother's neck, and kisses her, and sings itself asleep on her loving bosom, that the day can

ever come when it will stab that bosom, and these little hands will plant wrongs, sharper than daggers, in her bleeding heart? Yet that happens. And many things else happen that you would never fancy—the purple bells of the nightshade change into poisonous berries; the cold flint sends out sparks of burning fire; the viper that lay quiet in the “bundle of sticks” is aroused by the heat, and leaps from the flames to fasten on Paul’s hand.

Sins, like seeds, lie dormant till circumstances call them into active existence. Aware of that, Satan knew right well what he was saying when, in reply to God’s praise of his servant Job, he asked with a sneer, “Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.” And so the good man had done, but for restraining grace. What a burst of pent-up passion, like the fiery eruption of a volcano, breaks his seven days’ awful silence—“Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived; let that day be darkness. Why died I not from

the womb? Why did the knees prevent me? Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave?" Here Job curses the day that he was born; and he who curses God's providence, has to take but another step to curse God himself; and so, but that a divine arm had borne his burden and a divine hand curbed his passions, his wife, raging like a bear bereaved of her whelps, had had no occasion to reproach him for his tame submission. No. He had vented curses, if not as loud, perhaps more deep than hers; and, standing side by side over a grave big with bodies and with griefs, they had raised their hands together against the heavens, and flung back their life at him who had embittered and poisoned his gift. It was grace which made Job a pattern of patience. And let the grace, which sustained and restrained him, be withdrawn from us, our natural enmity and corruption would break out after a fashion both to astonish ourselves, and lead many to hold up their hands to exclaim, Lord, what is man?

This enmity is a doctrine into which the believer does not need to be reasoned. He feels it.

He reads its evidence elsewhere than in the Bible ; he reads it in his own heart. He, who knows himself, knows it. Breaking out like old sores, those sins of heart, and speech, and conduct by which it makes itself manifest, are his daily pain and fear and grief. Other soldiers have easy times of peace, when swords rust idly in their sheaths, and the trumpet sounds but for parade ; not he. There is never a day but he has to fight this enmity ; his life is a long and hard battle with it ; and, like a soldier tired of war, though true to his colours, he often wishes it were over—as, overcome of evil and vexed with himself, he falls on his knees to cry, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ; Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me ; Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

The existence of this enmity is taken for granted in my text ; for what need can there be to make peace between God and man if they are already friends ? Does not restoring peace between two nations imply that they had been standing to each other in the relation of antagonists, not of allies ? Not friends require to be reconciled, but foes. When with tabard and trumpet, royal heralds proclaim the peace, and cannon roar,

and church bells ring, and bonfires blaze, and bright illuminations turn night into day—in that darkened house, where the shouts of the crowd fall heavy on a widow's heart, who clasps her children in her arms, or where a father and mother are weeping over a bloody lock of their soldier boy's hair, ah! they know too well that war went before the peace; a tempest of blood and carnage before that dear-bought calm. When, therefore, my text says that peace was made, it implies that, though more unequally matched than if a presumptuous worm, which I could crush with one stamp of my foot, should raise itself up to bar my path and to contend with me, God and man stood face to face, front to front, in opposition the one to the other. Now, for a creature to assume such an attitude toward God is madness; and I pray the sinner to think of that. The issue is not doubtful where the chaff and the whirlwind meet; or the blast and autumn leaves meet; or the potsherd and the potter meet; or the unmasted, rudderless wreck meets the mountain billow that lifts her up, and whirls her crashing on the reef, around which next moment there float but some broken timbers. Nor is it doubtful here. Throw down, therefore, the weapons of your rebellion; yield yourselves to the love of Christ; kiss the

Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way ; for, who has an arm like God, or can thunder with a voice like his ?—Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but woe to the man that striveth with his Maker.

Animated by despair, man would fight on ; and fight it out to the last. Such is our nature, that if God is only set before me in the attitude and act of cursing, I believe I should curse back again ; proof against all argument drawn from the terrors of the law—to be conquered by no argument but the love of God. But does God appear as reciprocating our enmity ; as the enemy of man ? No ; not even when he condemns him. To suppose so were a great mistake ; were to do a gracious God most base wrong. I know that some, painting with dark and gloomy and repulsive colours, have given to the Supreme Being their own vengeful and malignant passions ; but that terrible spectre, who has a better claim than Death to be called the King of Terrors, is not the God of the Bible—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—He in whose name I call on the sinner to come to the throne of grace, and throw himself with confidence at the feet of mercy. I cannot deny that God condemns. I do deny that he ever condemns willingly. He does not hate the sinner, though he hates his

sins. He loves him ; loves you ; and if that judge is not considered the enemy of the pale, guilty, trembling wretch, on whose head, with a voice choked by emotion, and eyes dropping tears that leave no stain on the judge's ermine, reluctant he pronounces the terrible sentence of death, God is not to be considered the enemy of him whom, after years of long-suffering, he condemns to perdition. No. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The man who is damned has been his own enemy ; and should such, which God forbid, be your awful fate, it will be your bitterest thought in hell, that God sought to be reconciled to you, and you refused—madly refused. Give me a voice loud enough to reach the ends of the earth, and I would proclaim that God is not willing that any man in the wide world should perish ; but that all should come to him and live. Do men perish ?—hear the reason, Ye will not come to me that ye might have life. Would you be saved ?—listen to the gracious words, Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out ; if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

II. God desires to be reconciled to his enemies.

He did me wrong ; if there are faults on both sides, he was the first in the transgression ; there-

fore, if we are to be reconciled, he, not I, must be the first to make advances!—such, if you ever undertook the often thankless, and sometimes perilous, office of mediating between friends by differences estranged, you know to be the law of man. Man stands on his dignity; talks loftily of his honour, and what he calls justice to himself and the interests of society. The injured says of the injurer—and each generally thinks not himself but the other such—He is to come to me, I am not to go to him. Indignant at the proposal of whatever wounds his pride, he spurns it away, asking, Am I to stand at his door in the humble attitude of a suppliant, appearing as if I were the injurer, when I am the injured? You tell him that he who conquers himself, wins the victory; that he who ruleth his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city; that it is noble to make the first advances. No, is his answer, I will not meet him even half way; let him come and acknowledge his offence; I will not refuse my hand, but he must ask it; I am willing to bury the quarrel, but he must dig the grave.

Strange terms for those to insist on who know the grace of God, and how he forgives our own great debts. If God had so dealt with us, we should have gone to hell; every one of us. Yet such are the easiest terms on which man commonly

agrees to treat with man. Nay, I have known a mother sternly refuse forgiveness to the daughter who asked it on her knees. Come with me into that woman's cottage when she has received her summons to a tribunal, where she herself will need forgiveness. Her last hour is come ; and though in the dim light of a candle which we hold to her face, it looks firm and stern, we think surely she will relent in a dying hour, and forgiving, may go to be forgiven. Putting kind neighbours aside, I bend over that ghastly form, and in the awful presence of death, put her to the trial ; but there is no relenting. It is no time for speaking smooth things ; a soul is at stake ; and in half an hour she will be in hell, or heaven. She is plainly told, that unless she forgives, she cannot be forgiven. Yet, though Jesus hanging for sinners on the cross, and praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ; and though God, entreating the guilty to return to his bosom and stooping in love over his bitterest enemies, are set before her, it is in vain. The tree falls as it leans, as well as lies as it falls. God may forgive, not she. And, when sent away, as it were by a voice saying, She is joined to her idols, let her alone, I left these horrors, and stepping out into the calm night, raised my eyes to the spangled sky, how pleasant

it was to think of the contrast between our Father there and that iron mother; and how natural to exclaim with David, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man." Many a star studded night's dark vault, but none looked so bright as the blessed promise, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands."

My ways are not as your ways, neither are my thoughts as your thoughts, saith the Lord; and how is that illustrated in the peace restored between God and man! Who is the first to seek reconciliation here? Does God stand on his dignity, his honour, and the justice of the case? If ever any might, it was he. But did the great God sit aloft on his imperial throne, surrounded by holy angels, saying, Let these sinners come to me; the offence was theirs, and theirs also must be the humiliation? No. He takes the humiliation to himself; and might be supposed to be the injurer, not the injured. Veiling his majesty, and leaving heaven to seek our door, he stands, knocks, waits there; nay, with an infinite kindness and condescension, he goes down, as it were, on his knees. to beseech us,

as if the favour were done to him, to be reconciled. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did *beseech* you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." How hard are your hearts, if you can resist such love!

Some, talking as if we were saved just because Christ paid our debt, represent God's share in the transaction as little else than that of a severe, stern, unrelenting creditor, who takes no interest in his debtor beyond letting him out of prison when the surety has taken up the bond. Is this true, or fair to God? It is utterly false. Trace salvation to its source, it is higher than Calvary; its fountain is not in the cross of the incarnate Son, but in the bosom of the eternal Father. These hoar hills with their time-furrowed brows, that ocean which bears on its face no mark of age, those morning stars which sang together when our world was born, are not so old as the love of God. It dates from eternity. Eternal ages before the Law was given, or broken, or satisfied, God loved us. The central truth of the Bible, that on which I lay the greatest stress, is this, that God does not love us because Christ died for us, but that Christ died for us because God loved us. I do not disparage the work of Christ—far be such a thought from me; yet Christ himself is the gift of divine

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love, the expression of our Father's desire to be reconciled. The Lord of angels hanging on a mother's bosom, the Creator of heaven and earth bending to a menial task, the Judge of all standing his trial like a common felon, the Son of his Father's love nailed amid derision to an ignominious cross, death rudely seizing him, the dark grave receiving him, these we owe to the love of God—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What love do we owe him who so loved us!

III. To make our peace with God, Jesus Christ laid down his life.

I have seen one who had roughly reckoned up the cost of the rubies, pearls, emeralds, diamonds, that studded the golden arches of an earthly crown, stand astonished at its value. And yet, in point either of cost or brilliancy, what is that to the crown a ransomed beggar or saved harlot wears in heaven? In the sanctuary balances a saint outweighs a sovereign; and there is more value in the crown of one of these little ones, than in all the glory of all the holy angels. A word made them; "He said, and it was done"—

heaven shone with the angelic host. But to make a saint, the Son of God assumed our nature, came in the form of a servant, and, more amazing still, endured on a cross the death of a sinner—the price of our pardon being nothing less than what an apostle calls “the blood of God.” He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. To restore peace and open up a way of reconciliation, to save us from the curse of the law and the perdition of the pit, Jesus took our sins upon him, pouring out his soul unto death.

An ancient historian tells us how, at the siege of Babylon, Darius condemned to the cross three thousand captives. Another relates how, when Alexander inflicted long-threatened vengeance on Tyre, he crucified two thousand prisoners; and that crosses stood on her bloody shores thicker than masts in her crowded harbour. And when Rome let fly her eagles against Jerusalem, Titus, measuring out to the Jews the measure they had meted out to Jesus, gave them crosses enough —“good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over.” A spectator of the dreadful and tragic scenes, amid which Judah’s sun set in blood, tells that wood was wanting for crosses, and crosses were wanting for bodies.

Yet had all the crosses of Babylon and Tyre and Jerusalem been raised to save you, and on each cross, not a man, but an angel hung ; had all heaven been crucified, here is greater love : “ God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Purchasing our peace at such a price, God has done more for you, and me, than for all the universe besides. Creator of earth and heaven, he threw suns from his hand like sparks shot from the fire ; as a potter turns off the clay vessels from his wheel, he fashioned the worlds, and sent them away spinning in their orbits ; but here is a greater work. If Nehemiah's words were ever appropriate, it was to the lips which were silent amid the taunts and insults of the cross. When they cried, “ If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,” I know not that our Lord felt the insult ; that in that hour it troubled him—it might be but as a pebble flung into a storm-tossed ocean, adding nothing to the turmoil, nor so much as noticed amid the roar and swell of breakers ; it might be but as the sting of a miserable insect on the cheek of one who bestrides a fallen friend in battle, his shield ringing with blows, and his flashing blade sweeping down the foe around him ; it might be but as a feather added to that mountain of sin and wrath beneath which

Christ's great soul was bowing. Yet, had it pleased our Lord to answer the cruel taunt, I can fancy him bending from the cross to say, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down"—I have a world to save, therefore I cannot save myself—without shedding of blood is no remission—Poor scoffer ! no cross for me, no crown for thee.

Well may we say with Moses, I will turn aside, and see this great sight. What spectacle so wonderful or affecting ? Behold, how he loved us ! Around that cross let faith fling her eager, joyful arms—to embrace it. Oh ! clasp it with more than a lover's ardour ; cling to it in life and death like a drowning man, whom the waves cannot tear from his hold.

In making our peace with God, Christ had a great work to do. It is finished ; and, like his, ours only closes with the close of life. We may think of an aged Christian as one seated on Jordan's bank in the serene evening of a holy life ; waiting the summons ; looking back on this world without a regret, and forward to another without the shadow of a fear. We fancy him, by the eye of faith, piercing the mists that hang over death's dark flood ; and stretching out his eager arms, as he descries the "shining ones" on the other shore, to cry, Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I

might fly away and be at rest!" But the picture is more beautiful than true. In working out their salvation with fear and trembling, in carrying forward the work of sanctification by the help of the Spirit, God's people will feel it needful to watch and work to the end. The corn shakes when it is ripe; the fruit drops when it is mellow; the Christian dies when his work is done—a soldier, dying in harness, he fights on to the last gasp—a servant, he is found, up to the hour of his Master's coming, putting the house in order. Though the more work done now, the less there is to do at a less suitable time, the death-bed of the believer may be the scene of his hardest fight, and Satan's fiercest temptations. Nowhere has the roaring of the lion sounded more dreadful than in the valley of the shadow of death; and it has been with sin as with the monster of the deep, when to the cry, "Stern all," the men who have buried their lances in its ample sides seize the oars, to pull out of the sweep of that tremendous tail which beats the ocean till it sounds afar, and churns the waves into crimson foam. Men of undoubted piety have found sin's dying struggles to be the hardest they have encountered; and that it happens with the kingdom of heaven as with a city, which the violent take by force—the closest fighting is in the

breach; the battle rages fiercest where the city is entered, and the prize is about to be won.

We can, and should, leave the cares of our death to God. Our business is with present duty. Our work is not finished; with some it may be little more than begun; and any way I may address the advanced and aged Christian, in God's words to Joshua, "Thou art old and well stricken in years, and yet there is much land to be possessed." Sin has still more or less power over you, and it should have none; your corruptions have suffered a mortal wound, but they are not dead: your affections rise to heaven, yet how much they are held back by the things of earth? though your heart turns to Christ, like the needle to the pole, how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly it points to him? your spirit has wings, yet how short are its flights, and how often, like a half-fledged eaglet, has it to return to its nest on the Rock of Ages? your soul is a garden where Christ delights to walk when the north and south winds blow to draw out its spices, yet with many lovely flowers, how many vile weeds grow there? There is much work to do, little time to do it, and that little most uncertain. There is much need to work, the Spirit aiding, heaven helping us. Work then while it is called to-day, looking for rest in heaven. Oh,

how far short are we of its holiness ! So much sin is to be cast off, like a slough, with this mortal flesh, so many infirmities cleave to the best, as would seem to require a change at the moment of death second only to that of conversion. Saw we the spirit depart, as Elisha saw his master ascend to heaven, we might see a mantle of infirmity and imperfection dropped from the chariot that bears it in triumph to the skies. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit, in finishing our sanctification, must do some great and mysterious work in the very hour of death ; and that grace, like that wondrous but lovely plant which blows at midnight, attains its perfect beauty only amid the darkness of the dying hour. How that is done I do not know. It takes one whole summer to ripen the fields of corn, and five hundred years to bring the oak to its full maturity. But he at whose word this earth sprung into perfect being, with loaded orchards, and golden harvests, and clustering vines, and stately palms, and giant cedars, man in ripened manhood, and woman in her full-blown charms, can in the twinkling of an eye crown the work his grace began. With him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. He shall perfect that which concerneth you ; he shall bring forth the headstone

thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.—Now, THEREFORE, UNTO HIM THAT IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING, AND TO PRESENT YOU FAULTLESS BEFORE THE PRESENCE OF HIS GLORY WITH EXCEEDING JOY, TO THE ONLY WISE GOD OUR SAVIOUR, BE GLORY AND MAJESTY, DOMINION AND POWER, BOTH NOW AND EVER. AMEN.

THE END.

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